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Abstract: Printshops opened all over Germany shortly after 1450 with the invention of the metal moveable type printing press, marking Germany as the center of this new market. Each printer and binder had their own distinct characteristics featured in their works. They each had preferred materials or techniques, or simply had different materials available to them. This paper reviews aspects of incunable bookmaking and bookbinding to provide a broader material context for PSU's 1490 codex.

Printshops opened all over Germany shortly after 1450 with the invention of the metal moveable type printing press, marking Germany as the center of this new market. Over one-third of books produced in the fifteenth century were from Germany.[1] Printers were first established in Mainz and spread from there to Bamberg, Strasbourg, and beyond.[2] Soon after, Cologne became the "largest German printing center in the fifteenth century."[3] Entrepreneurs and artisans looking to find their way into the booming book market had their own styles and ideas for how their products would look. Each printer and binder had their own distinct characteristics featured in their works. They each had their preferred materials or techniques, or simply had different materials available to them. While many of these details have been lost to time, there are records and books that have survived over 500 years, including the Portland State University codex.

Book Production

[1] Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Book: A Global History*, 368.
[2] Ibid, 367.
[3] Ibid.

The production of books was not a solitary profession. While printing and binding were sometimes done by the printer, for the most part, book production was a largely collaborative effort. The process of creating a book starts with the author, of course, and then goes through a line of printers, binders, and sellers until it reaches its readers. Each of those steps included other professions as well, such as goldsmiths and leatherworkers, carpenters and blacksmiths. Each had its place in the process. Some craftsmen could perform multiple tasks for in the book production process, such as a printer using goldsmithing techniques to create their typeface or a leatherworker cutting the wood boards for the covers. Other steps, such as illuminating and rubricating, could also be added on later, to raise the market price of a book.

An early example is provided by Peter Schoeffer, a binder in Mainz, Germany, who operated his own printshop from 1456 to 1503. Once an apprentice to Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press with moveable typeface,[4] Schoeffer strove to create printed books that closely resembled scribal manuscripts. Schoeffer found "it was better to organize manual labour and artists than to try to arrive at the desired effect on the press alone."[5] As such, he employed the work of different binders and even different printers to produce work that looked similar to that of medieval scribes. He also employed artists, illuminators, and rubricators to 'finish' the texts, adding yet another element of scribal technique to the printed book. This idea of collaborative work "points to specialization in the printing business, and to Schoeffer's shrewd awareness that with mechanization it does not pay to duplicate the work of others."[6] Schoeffer, or whoever sold these works, could raise the price for such items, and turn more of a profit than they would have had they tried to mechanize every step of the process, wasting their

[4] Ibid.
[5] Lotte Hellinga, "Peter Schoeffer and the Book-Trade in Mainz: Evidence for the Organization" in *Bookbindings and Other Bibliophily: Essays in Honour of Anthony Hobson*, ed. Rhodes, 164.
[6] Ibid.

own time and manpower when they could collaborate with another craftsman to 'finish' the product. Schoeffer did try to mechanize the process of rubrication, along with his partner Johann Fust (c. 1400-1466). From 1457 until 1465, Schoeffer and Fust incorporated a "complex system of initials, various sets each printed in red and blue, and variously applied to individual copies within editions."[7] After 1465, the attempts to complete works entirely during the printing process were abandoned, and Schoeffer began to commission the completion of texts to specialists instead.[8] The example of Schoeffer's works emphasizes the idea that book production could be a collaborative process, and artisans could have many different specializations. There is evidence, for example, of Schoeffer and Peter Drach of Speyer, who printed the *Malleus Maleficarum* edition in the PSU codex, working together as trade contacts.[9] Moreover, it appears that both printers found in the PSU Codex, Peter Drach and Johann Prüss (printer of our *Fasciculus Temporum* edition), also collaborated. Collaboration between printers and booksellers, as well as other craftsmen who contributed to the production of books, was a vital part of book culture at this time.

Materials

Although the collaborative culture surrounding book production in the age of incunables is important, another crucial aspect of it is the materials used to create them. One of the main components of any book was the sheet material on which the text was printed. This could be made of parchment, vellum, or paper, which started to replace the former even before the printing press was invented.[10] In *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, J. A. Szirmai

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 143.
[9] Ibid., 164.
[10] J. A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 177.

describes the process in which printers sized paper before putting it through the press. Unsized paper meant it was flimsier than sized paper; the process of sizing treated paper to withstand the pressure of printing.[11] Binders could size their paper by soaking the paper in animal glue (sometimes printers mixed alum, a chemical compound used in tanning and dyeing, to the glue), hanging the papers on a rope of horse hair to dry, and then flattening the paper with a hammer.[12] This became standard practice in the late 1400s and gave the paper a smooth surface that would not be damaged by the press during printing.[13] Parchment and vellum were more expensive options but believed to last longer than paper from this period.

Another component of bookbinding was the boards from which book covers were made. In Germany in particular, beech was commonly used for boards, replacing oak beginning in the eleventh century.[14] Oak was still used for boards in Germany, though not as often. An insightful text, *The Techniques and Materials Used to Make Bookbindings on Incunables* by Nicholas Pickwoad, describes the use of wood boards as a tradition that carried over from manuscripts, in which they were used to keep the texts from warping.[15] An alternative cover material to wood was paper, referred to as paper board or pasteboard. Binders would glue paper sheets on top of one another until they reached the thickness they wanted, a practice that was already well-established in Islamic bookbinding techniques. However, incunables that were bound contemporaneously with this type of board are not common among the surviving texts today.[16] It is not clear whether it cost more for a wood board or pasteboard, as the materials themselves

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 216.
[15] Nicholas Pickwoad, "The Techniques and Materials Used to Make Bookbindings on Incunables," 18.
[16] Ibid, 21.

could vary, but pasteboards were usually lighter weight than wood, which was most likely a factor binders considered when deciding what they used.

Techniques

The techniques by which books were constructed are important in determining how and where they were made. To put it simply, printers would arrange their type to match the manuscript they were printing, apply ink to the type, lay a sheet of paper over the inked type, and press the two parts together. However, folios such as those in the *Fasciculus Temporum* were printed in a slightly different manner. According to Martin Boghardt, "in the early period, folio books were printed page by page, not sheet by sheet."[17] In this instance, a page refers to the portion of a sheet containing text, whereas a sheet is the entire piece of paper that contains the pages. This is to say that a single folio was run through a press at least twice, and two folios were contained on one sheet of paper, so it would go through the press four times. A printer would have printed the *recto* (right-hand page) of a folio, then the *verso* (reverse side of the same page), then the *recto* and *verso* of the next folio in that same order. The finished sheet would then be folded and holes would be punched along the fold to prepare the sheet for sewing.[18]

The practice of sewing folios and pages of paper together varied among bookbinders. There are many different ways to sew pages together, with either longstitch or chainstitch techniques, to create bookblocks. Bookblocks are the 'core' of a book, where all the pages are bound together. Bookblocks could be sold as-is, as a simple and cheaper alternative than binding it with a cover that could be either temporary or permanent. Permanent covers were made from

[17] Martin Boghardt, "The second disturbance in quire F: an unsolved mystery in Fust and Schöffer's '*Psalterium Benedictinum*' of 1459," in *The German Book 1450-1750*, ed. Flood and Kelly, 19.
[18] Ibid.

wood or pasteboard, usually leather-bound with some type of animal skin as the cover. Temporary covers could be other pieces of paper or parchment, as a way to protect the pages until a bindery could properly bind a cover to it. Sewing also connected the cover to the bookblock, and this was where the variation between bindings truly happens. Most binders would use supports between the bookblock and the cover, to help the bookblock stay bound. Other binders did not use supports. Supports were fashioned perpendicular to the pages, across the spine of the bookblock. In Germany, cord was the common material for sewing supports, rather than leather or thread.[19]

Tooling Decorations

The decoration of the book's cover was as personalized as the other processes of production. Binders would have an inventory of stamps that were not necessarily unique to them, with some exceptions, but the tooling on the covers was another way for binders to put their mark on their work. One such practice, name-stamping, was used throughout Germany and Austria, though it was used far more often in the town of Erfurt.[20] In Erfurt, at least twenty-one binders were known to have used name-stamps until the beginning of the sixteenth century.[21] This makes the PSU codex rather peculiar, as it does not have a name-stamp included in its cover decoration, though it seems to have been bound in Erfurt in the early 1500s. Another kind of decoration technique called the *cuir-ciselé*, also known as cut-leather decoration, was most popular in Germany. It was an "extremely laborious technique" that required a high amount of skill and dexterity.[22] The process of *cuir-ciselé* decoration involved stenciling or sketching out

[19] Pickwoad, "The Techniques and Materials Used to Make Bookbindings on Incunables," 13.
[20] Paul Needham, *Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings 400-1600*, 82.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Szirmai, *Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 242.

the design first, then going over the lines with a chiseled tool, and then repeatedly impressing dots upon the background of the design, leaving the unimpressed portions as the main focus of the design.[23] While our codex is decorated with hand-stamping methods rather than this cut-leather method or name-stamping, these two practices were widely used in Germany and the surrounding areas, and reflect a personal choice of the binders.

Conclusion

After the invention of the metal moveable type printing press in the fifteenth century, printshops and binders opened up all around Europe and most notably in Germany, where there were many shops concentrated in German towns such as Erfurt and Strasbourg. With a large number of artisans and entrepreneurs opening shops came the vast amounts of variety among designs and techniques used in book production. From the sewing techniques to the cover materials to the decorations on the bindings, books were incredibly customized between printers and binders and any other artist they came across.

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[23] Pickwoad, "The Techniques and Materials Used to Make Bookbindings on Incunables," 27.

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