

The Bibliography and Textual Study of American Books

G. THOMAS TANSELLE

I

THE WORDS one reads on a printed page are the product of a complex process of transmission, reaching ultimately back to the author's mind—a process affected both by mechanical factors (the physical routines associated with pen and type) and by more intangible social and economic pressures. What a text says is forever linked to the mundane realities underlying the physical product that gives the text a material embodiment. For this reason, the interdependence of all approaches to the study of the history of books is nowhere better exemplified than in the fields of bibliographical and textual scholarship. Those interested in tracing the textual history of a printed work and assessing the authority of variants in its text must take into account all evidence they can find relating to the printing and publishing history of the work—the clues present in copies of the printed books themselves, as well as information from printers' and publishers' records, from letters and journals, and from previous scholarly studies that serve to suggest norms and contexts in regard to printing and publishing practice and indeed to society at large. Conversely, those pursuing broad historical questions raised by the existence of books—the influence of books on the social and intellectual life

This paper was prepared for a needs-and-opportunities conference on the history of the book in American culture, held at the American Antiquarian Society November 1–3, 1984, and funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, with a matching grant from the Earhart Foundation.

of a particular period, for example—must be concerned with the ideas in those books and therefore must take note of textual matters and of the connections between textual content and printing processes. The impact of a specific work cannot be properly examined without a knowledge of the textual differences among copies of that work, since obviously a difference in text may make a difference in readers' interpretations.

Once one understands how physical processes affect text and recognizes that all the copies of an edition, being separate physical objects, are separate pieces of evidence, one sees that intellectual history and bibliographical analysis are indissolubly tied. The emphasis in some recent scholarship on the changes in social and cultural life wrought by the coming of the printed book has perhaps made it somewhat less easy for us to keep in mind the similarities between books and manuscripts. We expect the texts of manuscripts to differ one from another; but we often expect printed texts—copies of a single edition, at least—not to vary. Obviously it is unscholarly to assume that objects one has not seen or examined are identical. I cannot think of any other area in which responsible scholars are so careless in their handling of historical evidence. The printed sheets of an edition are produced one by one, and therefore changes can enter, either intentionally or inadvertently, at any point in the process. It is naive to think of a text as being stable in print: a text not only varies, almost always, from one edition (that is, typesetting) to another; it also can vary—and often does so, in all periods, not just the early centuries of printing—from one copy of an edition to another. Such variations, along with other physical evidence, can increase one's knowledge of the bookmaking process, even as they increase one's understanding of the text.

These points are obvious. And yet, remarkably, they have not been heeded to any significant extent in the study of American books. Of course, the study of the book in America is a much larger subject than the study of American books; and to

the extent that one is concerned with imported English books, the situation is not so depressing, for a great body of work devoted to the bibliographical analysis of English books has been produced in this century—work that not only illuminates the printing and textual history of particular books but also provides techniques and procedures of wider applicability. Yet however important British imports have been in the American book trade—and they have been very important indeed—the full story of that trade, and of the book in America more generally, must clearly take the native product into account as well. One of the primary tasks for the future is the careful scrutiny, the page-by-page examination, of multiple copies of American books, followed by the analysis of the physical evidence obtained thereby. The results would enrich, as well as revise, the story of American book production and would simultaneously enable us to comment in a more informed way on the texts that were made available to American readers. At present, however, the analytical bibliography of American books, particularly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, remains in a primitive state.

Criticisms of this situation are nevertheless seldom heard. David D. Hall, in his James Russell Wiggins Lecture, *On Native Ground: From the History of Printing to the History of the Book* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1984; also printed in the Society's *Proceedings* 93[1983]:313–36), echoes the sentiments of many historians when he comments on the undeniable strength of the tradition of local imprint recording in the United States and judges that by the 1930s 'a distinct maturity had been achieved' (p. 10). He does not proceed to point out how immature in general that work was in comparison with what had by then been accomplished for English books, nor does he suggest how inadequate much of that work is by present-day standards of bibliographical research. There is no question about the quantity of work that has been done: my *Guide to the Study of United States Imprints* (Cam-

bridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) devotes sixty-seven pages to recording imprint lists and bibliographies, most of them regional in scope, and another ninety-four pages to enumerating works that list American imprints by genre. But we have no grounds for complacency in the face of all this work, for most of it shows no understanding of the fact that enumeration, even if that is the sole aim, must eventually rest on analysis. Naturally, we should be grateful for the devotion of scores of workers who have retrieved obscure printed items from their places of hiding and who have patiently pieced together a record of local printing; but we also have to recognize that this work is only a start and that it does not, by itself, put our national bibliography on a sound footing. Charles Evans, who undertook the more ambitious task of recording all American imprints to 1820,¹ certainly deserves our gratitude; but the genuine debt we owe him should not prevent our recognizing how amateurish and unsophisticated he was in bibliographical matters, compared with the scholars in England who, in Evans's time, were focusing on the bibliography of incunabula and pre-1640 British books.

Since then the record of early American printing has been substantially improved, largely through two efforts associated with the American Antiquarian Society: first, Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney's *National Index of American Imprints through 1800* (1969), an offshoot of the production (also supervised by AAS) of the Readex Microprint set devoted to early American imprints; and second, the recataloguing of AAS's holdings of pre-1801 American imprints, as the first phase of the North American Imprints Program (one goal of which is to contribute the American entries to the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue project). These newly catalogued entries for AAS copies certainly surpass previous listings; nevertheless, they constitute a catalogue of a collection, not a bibliography, as long as the descriptions are based on the

¹ I shall not provide full citations of works, such as this, that are listed in my *Guide*.

examination of single copies.² It is the second phase of NAIP that will provide the opportunity for the emergence of a bibliography, for that phase is to consist of obtaining reports on copies in other libraries. Determining when the multiple reports of a given title refer to the same edition, or to different editions, or to different issues of a single edition, requires the analysis of physical evidence; and the contribution made by the resulting bibliography will rise in proportion to the amount of direct comparison of copies that can be managed. The English tradition of bibliographical analysis has kept the work on English books a step ahead: Katharine F. Pantzer, in revising the *Short-Title Catalogue* of pre-1640 English books (London: Bibliographical Society, 1926), has had the rich body of previous analytical work on these books to draw on and also has often engaged in further analysis herself, identifying issues and noting variant formes. One does not expect a work of this scope to present the quantity of physical detail that would be possible in a more specialized study; but one is continually impressed by how much intensive investigation does in fact underlie the entries in the new *STC* (1976–). The four-page table devoted to the *Book of Common Prayer* (16267 ff.), providing signature collations and identifying states, is of course exceptional, but it dramatically illustrates the necessity of examining bibliographical evidence. Many other, more routine, entries draw concisely on similar research, as when they cite variants in headlines (as in 21254 ff.) or particular reset sheets (as in 18282a) to distinguish editions. Without such analysis, an inventory of printed output does not fulfill its function, for its aim is not simply to record titles of works but to identify editions of those works.

This contrast in the treatment of the early printing of England and the United States is reflected in other comprehensive

² For further explanation of this point, see G. T. Tanselle, 'Descriptive Bibliography and Library Cataloguing,' *Studies in Bibliography* 30(1977):1-56; reprinted in *Selected Studies in Bibliography* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1979), pp. 37-92.

bibliographies as well. There is the obvious contrast, for example, between David Foxon's exemplary *English Verse, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), which includes signature collations in every entry, and Lyle Wright's *American Fiction* (covering 1774-1900; published 1939-69), which records only the number of pages of each item.³ Lack of attention to physical evidence has unfortunately been a characteristic of much bibliographical work on Americana, even in studies of lesser scope than those of Evans and Wright. Among the best of the state imprint bibliographies to have appeared in the last twenty-five years are Robert Greenwood's for California (1961), Marcus A. McCorison's for Vermont (1963), Cecil K. Byrd's for Illinois (1966), George N. Belknap's for Oregon (1968), Evald Rink's for Delaware (1969), and Robert D. Armstrong's *Nevada Printing History* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981); yet, excellent as these works are in many respects, none of them includes signature collations. Nor are signature collations to be found in such earlier prominent works of this kind as Winkler, Streeter, and Friend's for Texas (1949-63), Bristol's for Maryland (1953), Byrd and Peckham's for Indiana (1955), and Crandall's and Harwell's for the Confederate states (1955, 1957). The presence or absence of signature collations is a revealing touchstone of bibliographical approach, for those collations, by indicating the structure of each successive gathering of a book or pamphlet, provide the most basic record of physical makeup, to which any further bibliographical analysis must refer.⁴ Failure

³ Rather, it normally cites the last numbered page, in order 'to afford an idea of the length of the contents' (2d rev. ed. of vol. 1, 1969, p. x). Wright's essentially unbibliographical approach is further shown by his statement that 'rarely' has he 'examined more than one copy of a title' (p. ix).

⁴ Early in the century Victor Hugo Paltsits, an accomplished bibliographer of Americana, issued 'A Plea for an Anatomical Method in Bibliography,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 1(1904-7):123-24, calling for 'a more scholarly method in American bibliography,' which would entail 'an analysis of each volume by its component parts, by its pagination, by its signatures, and by the location of its plates and maps.' He complained, 'The mere lumping of pagination and plates falls far short of usefulness; it is, indeed, a source of irritation and annoyance.' His plea went largely unheeded in the field of Americana.

to include an element of such fundamental importance would seem to suggest a lack of understanding of the significance of what the analytical bibliographers of English literature have been discovering over the last century about the connections between text and physical structure.⁵ In any event, the truth is that signature collations have had little role to play in the development of the form of the peculiarly American genre of state imprint bibliographies.

Douglas C. McMurtrie, whose voluminous production of imprint lists in the 1930s and 1940s helped establish as standard a form of entry without collation, stated explicitly in his *Manual of Procedure* for those employed in the American Imprints Inventory (Chicago: Historical Records Survey, 1938) that 'we want as a final record the equivalent of a good library catalogue card, which also constitutes a sound title for inclusion in a bibliography' (p. 20); he thus provided some instructions on recording pagination (pp. 31-34) but said nothing about signatures. (Of course, it might not have been feasible to instruct WPA workers in the rudiments of bibliographical analysis; but apparently McMurtrie saw no necessity for including signature collations in his own bibliographies.) Neither did the Bibliographical Society of America insist on signatures in the series of four imprint bibliographies it sponsored at McMurtrie's urging (on the Dakotas, Arkansas, Rhode Island, and Oklahoma, 1947-51); John E. Alden, however, who prepared the one on Rhode Island (1949), did include a signature collation in a few entries and complained in his preface, 'It is regrettable that in the collation the methods of the American Imprints Inventory did not permit the recording of signatures' (p. xi). A more significant statement than McMurtrie's *Manual*, by a more important scholar, was Lawrence C. Wroth's

⁵ This lack of understanding can also be revealed by bibliographers who do give signature collations. Charles F. Heartman, for example, in his *American Primers, Indian Primers, Royal Primers* (1935) normally records signatures; but sometimes he says simply 'Irregular signatures' or 'No signatures'—as if the signatures themselves, rather than the gatherings, were of primary interest.

Rosenbach Lecture on 'Early Americana,' printed in *Standards of Bibliographical Description* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949). Wroth, who had provided signature collations in *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland* (1922), did recommend that standard entries for Americana should contain a 'summary statement of signatures' (p. 118), but he immediately added that his proposed 'minimum' would not be 'altogether acceptable to many careful bibliographers of today'—among whom he had in mind were presumably Curt F. Bühler and James G. McManaway, who contributed the essays on 'Incunabula' and 'Early English Literature' to the same volume. He was clearly departing from their recommendations: after registering his respect for 'a minute analysis of the make-up of a book,' he asserted that 'in the treatment of Americana the reward of this procedure seldom compensates for the pains required to carry it through' (p. 118). What he advocated for Americana was 'a shift from elaboration in the description of the physical form of a book to the consideration of its meaning in relation to its time and subject' (p. 112). That his suggestion of a 'summary statement of signatures' had little influence on bibliographers of Americana can therefore no doubt be explained by the context in which it was set. Wroth was in fact reaffirming a tradition that did not put great weight on physical analysis, as the juxtaposition of his essay with Bühler's and McManaway's made all the more evident.

The reasons for this situation make it an interesting episode in the history of scholarship, for they underscore the harmful effects of the lack of communication between fields. Modern analytical bibliography has developed largely in connection with literary study and the establishment of literary texts; and historians, dealing with what in general is thought of as 'non-literary' writing, have therefore often felt that they need not look closely into the matter of analytical bibliography, believing it to be more related to the concerns of literary scholars than to their own. The earliest important work in analytical

and descriptive bibliography was in fact not literary in orientation, for it emerged from the examination of incunabula (many of which could scarcely be called 'literary' in content) in the late nineteenth century by such men as Henry Bradshaw, Robert Proctor, and A. W. Pollard. But the more direct impetus for the great elaboration of the field during this century was the work on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama undertaken in the early years of the century by Pollard, R. B. McKerrow, and W. W. Greg. They came to realize that an essential part of their preparation for understanding the textual history of a work and thus for making informed textual decisions was as thorough a knowledge as possible of the page-by-page printing history of the relevant editions. Their influential writings illustrated a new approach to the study of printed texts, based on the recognition that much important evidence relating to the production history of printed books remains accessible in the finished products.⁶ This important insight is obviously applicable to all books of all periods; but the vast body of analytical work resulting from it has been largely devoted to English Renaissance drama, following the lead of Pollard, McKerrow, and Greg, with some attention being paid to other English books of literary content through the eighteenth century. When people speak of an Anglo-American tradition of bibliography, they are referring to the fact that American as well as British scholars have made notable contributions to the study of the physical evidence in books; the term does not refer to research on American books, for the bulk of the books examined in this way has been English. One can understand, of course, given the importance of the literature that appeared in English books of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth

⁶ I have offered some further reflections on the historical development of analytical and descriptive bibliography in 'Physical Bibliography in the Twentieth Century,' in *Books, Manuscripts, and the History of Medicine: Essays on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Osler Library*, ed. Philip M. Teigen (New York: Science History Publications, 1982), pp. 55-79; and in 'The Evolving Role of Bibliography, 1884-1984,' in *Books and Prints, Past and Future: Papers Presented at the Grolier Club Centennial Convocation* (New York: Grolier Club, 1984), 15-31.

centuries, why those books have been subjected to intense scrutiny. But the neglect of the physical evidence in pre-nineteenth-century American books does not spring solely from the nature of their contents. It is largely the result of two fallacies that have been fostered by the historical circumstances under which analytical bibliography has grown: the notion that such analysis is tied to textual criticism and scholarly editing and the belief that it is a tool more appropriate for research on literature than on other kinds of writing. Neither of these positions is tenable; yet they have been accepted as true by many historians who are thoughtful in other respects.

Wroth's essay on 'Early Americana' is a prominent case in point. Although it makes a number of valuable peripheral observations, the argument at its center is seriously defective. In attempting to support his view that bibliographers of Americana should emphasize historical context rather than physical form, he sets forth a dubious distinction between belles-lettres and Americana: 'Works of the creative imagination—plays, poems, and novels—are subjective in origin, proceeding from within, from the mind and spiritual experience of the author. The normal work of Americana, on the other hand, is an objective work, brought into being through the impact upon the author of some event or movement or set of circumstances outside himself' (p. 111). The line separating belles-lettres from other writings, if there is one, has never been adequately defined, and Wroth's effort is clearly superficial; but for present purposes the important matter is what this division (however arrived at) leads to. It presumably provides the theoretical basis on which Wroth rests his statement, a few pages later, that the 'historian is less interested in minor textual differences than is the student of literature' (p. 118). But if historians are interested in what texts say, how can this be? Wroth's next sentence only confuses the issue: 'Such differences often are important, but the cost of discovering them and making them known is immense when it may be achieved only by the most

intensive physical analysis of a volume.' If textual differences are 'often' important, one might expect a scholar to feel an obligation to uncover them, regardless of the arduousness of the process. Indeed, even if they were seldom important, the fact is that they obviously can be so, and one cannot know which is the case until one discovers and studies them. Wroth's elaboration of his point does not serve to lessen the fuzziness of the argument:

Extraordinary results have been attained in the field of letters through this sort of bibliographical procedure, for in creative writing every textual difference, whether a radical revision or simply the change of an adjective or the cadence of a line, is or may be important to the student of taste or feeling. But I repeat that in my experience with Americana the discoveries made by these exhaustive procedures are so seldom important as to make their general adoption of no avail. Better to use that physical effort and cerebration in the study of the history and significance of the text in its relationship to subject and to other texts. (p. 119)

The double fallacy I spoke of underlies this passage, with its assumption that physical analysis must serve textual ends⁷ and that a knowledge of textual variants is peculiarly relevant to literary study. There is no hint of recognition here that physical evidence is important in its own right, even if one had no interest whatever in textual matters; it is, after all, the primary evidence out of which the history of printing in a given time and place is built up, book by book. Nor does this passage suggest any understanding of the fact that all texts, literary or not, pose problems of interpretation and that a knowledge of textual variants is of interest not merely to 'the student of taste or feeling' but to all readers who wish to understand, as fully as they can, what a work is saying. Wroth's lapses here are sur-

⁷ Wroth states flatly, 'The first and most important affirmation is that the end of bibliographical analysis is the elucidation of the history of texts' (p. 105). He calls this an 'accepted' definition; if so, it is a widespread misconception. Textual study, of course, is but one of the uses to which bibliographical analysis may be put.

prising, but I cite them because he is not the only scholar to have fallen into a similar line of thought. I have no doubt that many scholars even now would be inclined at first to agree with Wroth, until they stopped to examine more closely what is being said. If so, their first reaction is testimony to how little understood are the connections between the process of textual transmission and the intellectual content of the work transmitted, even among those accustomed to examining documentary evidence.

One hopeful recent sign is Hall's statement, in his Wiggins Lecture, that a task for the future is the incorporation of the findings of analytical bibliography into the more socially oriented history of the book (p. 27). Hall is not entirely free, however, of the misconceptions we have been considering, as his remark about 'the work of analytical bibliographers and their holy of holies, the text,' shows. Furthermore, he comments only on textual study directed toward establishing the texts intended by their authors.⁸ But a related point worth adding is that for historical study one also is interested in less authoritative forms of a text if they were the ones that influenced people. If, for example, an unauthorized and carelessly produced edition of a work—one that had no connection with the author—was widely circulated, the historian cannot dismiss it, since many people would have encountered the author's ideas in this form. To attempt to establish the author's inten-

⁸ He points out—what is obviously true—that it 'may be impossible to arrive at a text that corresponds exactly to the author's intention'; but the reasons for that situation are not what Hall implies in his ensuing discussion. 'Certainly the American printer and the American reader,' he says, 'were quite indifferent to this issue, content as they were to publish and to read the most extraordinarily corrupted editions. The very concept of a perfect text is an invention of the twentieth century, and cannot be imposed upon the past.' There is no doubt that readers of all places and times, not just early America, have generally been unconcerned about the reliability of the texts they read; and unquestionably some writers wavered among several intentions at various points in their work (textual scholars do not speak of 'perfect' texts). But these facts do not invalidate the scholar's attempt to uncover whatever can be learned about an author's intention and the extent to which it was realized in the published texts available to contemporary readers. The problem exists, whether or not much attention was paid to it in the past.

tion is certainly a basic task; but one must also recognize that the author's reputation, contemporary or posthumous, may have been based on an edition that in various ways subverted that intention. The importance of textual study for the historian is not simply to set matters right (that is, to ascertain just what the writer meant to say); it is also to put one in a better position for understanding what the contemporary audience *perceived* the writer to be saying. What may appear at first to be a contemporary misunderstanding of an author's point of view on a given point may actually have resulted from the correct interpretation of an incorrect text. Since the process of textual transmission leading to publication can so easily result in corrupt texts, it is perhaps not going too far to suggest that corrupt texts have in general been more widely read and have had a greater impact than accurate texts—with various concomitant distortions, both major and minor, in how those texts have been interpreted. The process of establishing accurate texts—which necessarily involves analysis of the physical bibliographical evidence, the clues present in the printed product itself—is therefore one that all historical scholars (in any field: literature, or music, or political history) have an obligation to be familiar with, whether or not they are preparing editions. It is simply part of the equipment necessary for historical investigation.

II

Any survey of what has been accomplished along these lines must deal to a considerable extent with work focusing on British or continental books. Because so little bibliographical work of an analytical nature has been devoted to American books, historians of the book in America must turn for basic instruction to studies that at first may seem unrelated to their concerns, particularly the large body of scholarship focusing on the physical evidence in the early editions of the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The most famous and influential

book in the field of analytical bibliography is R. B. McKerrow's *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), which is still the best starting place. Written by one of the founders of the field, it effectively conveys the importance of, and the attitude of mind necessary for, the pursuit of bibliographical evidence. The last three words of the title should be ignored: McKerrow was addressing students of literature, but what he has to say is crucial for all who use printed books. For technical details—that is, for an account of the processes of typesetting, papermaking, printing, binding, and so on in various periods—McKerrow has been superseded by Philip Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), which is the other book to start with. McKerrow's classic work, however, has not been superseded as a statement of an approach.⁹ Armed with a point of view from McKerrow and a body of factual information from Gaskell, one can begin to examine physical features of books with some understanding of their significance. Although not intended as a textbook, Charlton Hinman's great work, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), does serve as an introduction to the various techniques that have been developed for extracting information from physical evidence in Renaissance English books, since it makes skillful use of those techniques. Another similarly useful large work, which applies the techniques to quarto rather than folio printing, is the first volume of Peter W. M. Blayney's *The Texts of "King Lear" and Their Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). A theoretical underpinning for the field is provided by Fredson Bowers's *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Five years later D. F. McKenzie criticized the field for its incautious use of inductive evidence, in 'Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and

⁹ I have elaborated on this point in a review of Gaskell in *Costerus*, n.s. 1(1974): 129–50.

Printing-House Practices,' *Studies in Bibliography* 22(1969): 1-75, which stressed the importance of research in printers' records. No one would defend the careless work that has sometimes been produced by analytical bibliographers whose enthusiasm outran their judgment, and no one would deny the importance of studying any surviving evidence in archival documents; but one must face the fact that the books themselves are part of the total body of evidence, and we have to continue to seek ways of deciphering and using the evidence in them.¹⁰

Hinman's book builds on a large body of work by many scholars, and the work has not stopped with Hinman. The literature of the analytical bibliography of Renaissance English books is so large that I shall not attempt to do more here than cite some outstanding examples of different techniques, which will serve to show the kind of thinking involved in the search for clues in physical evidence. Perhaps the most obvious technique is the examination of spelling differences throughout a volume to see whether they reflect the habits of different compositors and whether one can then assign specific sections of the book to each compositor; on this matter, see, for example, Charlton Hinman, 'Principles Governing the Use of Variant Spellings as Evidence of Alternate Setting by Two Compositors,' *Library*, 4th ser. 21(1940):78-94, and T. H. Hill, 'Spelling and the Bibliographer,' *Library*, 5th ser. 18(1963):1-28. (Other features that might help to distinguish compositors—such as punctuation, contractions, and the typographic handling of stage directions, scene headings, and speech prefixes in plays—have also been studied in this way.) One of the most powerful techniques is the analysis of the recurrence of recognizable types: when pieces of type become damaged so that they are recognizable, their reappearances

¹⁰ I have made these points in more detail in 'Bibliography and Science,' *Studies in Bibliography* 27(1974):55-89 (reprinted in *Selected Studies*, pp. 1-36); and I have also tried to show how analytical bibliography has contributed facts to general printing history, in 'Analytical Bibliography and Renaissance Printing History,' *Printing History* 3, no. 1(1981):24-33.

throughout a volume can be tracked, providing evidence as to when the type from a given forme was available for reuse, a fact that has a bearing on a number of matters, among them the determination of the order in which pages were set and how many were standing in type simultaneously. The detection and analysis of type shortages (signaled by a compositor's substitution of italic for roman, small capitals for large, and so forth) is similarly useful. These points are clearly set forth by Robert K. Turner, Jr., in 'Printing Methods and Textual Problems in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Q1,' *Studies in Bibliography* 15 (1962):33-55, and in 'Reappearing Types as Bibliographical Evidence,' *Studies in Bibliography* 19(1966):198-209. Recurring types have been put to effective use in proving that certain books were set by formes (that is, according to the pages that would be on the press at one time) rather than seriatim (that is, in the numerical order of the pages); setting by formes, in turn, required 'casting off copy' to estimate how much text would fit on each page (a process that, when inaccurate, could obviously affect the text itself). The pioneering article in this area is William H. Bond's 'Casting Off Copy by Elizabethan Printers: A Theory,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 42(1948):281-91; and one of the classic showpieces of bibliographical analysis is Charlton Hinman's 'Cast-Off Copy for the First Folio of Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6(1955):259-73.

In addition to establishing the history of the composition (typesetting) of an edition, the bibliographer can sometimes also work out the precise sequence of the formes through the press by observing the patterns of recurrence of particular settings of running titles (which are identifiable not only by damaged types but by peculiarities of spacing): see Fredson Bowers's 'Notes on Running-Titles as Bibliographical Evidence,' *Library*, 4th ser. 19(1938-39):315-38, and his 'The Headline in Early Books' and Charlton Hinman's 'New Uses for Headlines as Bibliographical Evidence,' in *English Insti-*

tute Annual 1941, pp. 185–205, 207–22. Evidence from paper is of course central to determining format and thus to the arrangement of the type-pages in the forme, and anyone who examines paper should understand the points made by Allan Stevenson in a series of ground-breaking articles: 'New Uses of Watermarks as Bibliographical Evidence,' *Studies in Bibliography* 1 (1948–49):151–82; 'Watermarks Are Twins,' 4 (1951–52):57–91; 'Chain-Indentations in Paper as Evidence,' 6 (1954):181–95; and 'Paper as Bibliographical Evidence,' *Library*, 5th ser. 17 (1962):197–212. There are other important articles on related questions of format, such as Kenneth Povey's 'On the Diagnosis of Half-Sheet Impositions,' *Library*, 5th ser. 11 (1956):268–72; and discussions of cancels, such as R. W. Chapman's *Cancels* (London: Constable, 1930), are likely to make use of evidence from paper. The fact that stop-press alterations occurred routinely in the printing of seventeenth-century books provides a great body of textual variants that can shed light on proofreading procedures. Attempting to evaluate the significance of the various combinations of corrected and uncorrected formes that can occur has resulted in some of the most sophisticated pieces of analytical bibliography, such as Fredson Bowers's 'An Examination of the Method of Proof-Correction in *Lear*,' *Library*, 5th ser. 2 (1947–48):20–44, and his 'Elizabethan Proofing,' in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. James G. McManaway et al. (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1948), pp. 571–86.

These techniques, developed for the study of Renaissance books, are often applicable, sometimes with adjustments, to books of later periods. Compositor analysis, for example, is worth trying on later books, though the features that might vary from compositor to compositor may naturally be different at different times; and running-title analysis is productive for some eighteenth-century books, as David L. Vander Meulen demonstrates in 'The Printing of Pope's *Dunciad*, 1728,'

Studies in Bibliography 35(1982):271–85. (He also uses an eighteenth-century book to make a major contribution to the examination of paper: ‘The Identification of Paper without Watermarks: The Example of Pope’s *Dunciad*,’ *Studies in Bibliography* 37[1984]:58–81.) In addition, new practices enter into book production in successive periods, leaving their mark on the finished books and thereby offering a new kind of evidence for investigation. A feature unique to eighteenth-century books is press figures, those numbers (not signatures) that often are present, one to a forme, in the lower margins. Of the many discussions of press figures, some of the most important are Philip Gaskell’s ‘Eighteenth Century Press Numbers: Their Use and Usefulness,’ *Library*, 5th ser. 4(1949–50): 249–61; William B. Todd’s ‘Observations on the Incidence and Interpretation of Press Figures,’ *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950–51):171–205; and Kenneth Povey’s ‘A Century of Press Figures,’ *Library*, 5th ser. 14(1959):251–73. The literature of analytical bibliography focusing on the eighteenth-century is not large, however, and that devoted to the nineteenth-century is quite sparse. Among the most interesting of what has appeared are Oliver L. Steele’s series dealing with the complicated question of format in machine-printed books (see, for example, ‘A Note on Half-Sheet Imposition in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Books,’ *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* 1962, pp. 545–47) and Peter L. Shillingsburg’s articles on the problems of books printed from plates (such as ‘Detecting the Use of Stereotype Plates,’ *Editorial Quarterly* 1, no. 1 [1975]: 2–3, and ‘Register Measurement as a Method of Detecting Hidden Printings,’ *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 73[1979]:484–88).

The kind of analysis of books reflected in the titles cited here is a natural part of the research underlying a descriptive bibliography: without such analysis, a bibliography would be deficient in its account of the production history of the books covered and very likely in its classification of their impressions

and issues as well. Analytical bibliography and descriptive bibliography are obviously complementary, and the historian of American books should be acquainted with the standard practices of descriptive bibliography, developed (like the analytical techniques) in connection with European books—in such monuments as A. W. Pollard's first volume of the *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1908–) and W. W. Greg's *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939–59). The great codification of these practices is Fredson Bowers's *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), which starts from the position that a bibliography is a historical study and that it is based on the detailed examination of physical evidence.¹¹ His book remains the primary one in its field.¹²

Textual scholarship, too, in its search for all relevant evidence, must take physical evidence into account; the research required for a descriptive bibliography and for an edition overlap so considerably that both are often planned as a single undertaking. Anyone who wishes to study the role of the book in America is perforce concerned with the texts of the books that have circulated there and thus needs to be aware of the principal issues raised in recent years by editorial theorists. Debates about establishing texts have of course existed for centuries, and in some respects the issues remain the same. But just what those issues are and how they may have been

¹¹ It uses American books as examples from time to time, including one of 1669 (p. 222).

¹² Readers can decide whether it should be supplemented by studies since that time of bibliographical arrangement (*Studies in Bibliography* 37[1984]:1–38), the concepts of *issue* and *state* (*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 69[1975]:17–66) and *ideal copy* (*Studies in Bibliography* 33[1980]:18–53), tolerances (*Library*, 5th ser. 23[1968]:1–12), title-page transcription and signature collation (*Studies in Bibliography* 38[1985]:45–81), typography (*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 60[1966]:185–202, paper (*Studies in Bibliography* 24 [1971]:27–67), inserted plates (*Studies in Bibliography* 35[1982]:1–42), and publishers' binding patterns and colors (*Studies in Bibliography* 23[1970]:71–102, and 20[1967]:203–34).

affected by the growth of analytical bibliography are matters that the student of book history, not merely the prospective editor, cannot afford to ignore. Much of the debate in the English-speaking world in the last thirty years has stemmed in one way or another from W. W. Greg's celebrated essay 'The Rationale of Copy-Text,' published in *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950-51):19-36, and reprinted in his *Collected Papers*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 374-91. I have tried to provide a critical history of this debate in two pieces in *Studies in Bibliography*: 'Greg's Theory of Copy Text and the Editing of American Literature,' 28(1975): 167-229 (reprinted in *Selected Studies*, pp. 245-308), and 'Recent Editorial Discussion and the Central Questions of Editing,' 34(1981):23-65. Two brief introductions to modern editorial thinking are Fredson Bowers, 'Textual Criticism,' in *The Aims and Methods of Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. James Thorpe (2d ed.; New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1970), pp. 161-88; and G. T. Tanselle, 'Textual Scholarship,' in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1981), pp. 29-52. The suggestions for further reading appended to the latter essay need not be repeated here; but perhaps in this context I should call attention to my effort—in 'The Editing of Historical Documents,' *Studies in Bibliography* 31(1978): 1-56 (reprinted in *Selected Studies*, pp. 451-506)—to show the illogic of treating 'historical' writings differently from 'literary' writings.

The books and articles I have named here are only a small selection from a voluminous literature, but I believe they form a reasonable introduction to bibliographical thinking—to the kind of thinking that should underlie all study of book history. When we look for what work, built on such a base, has been done specifically on the book in America, there is little to point to, other than a small number of bibliographies and the grow-

ing shelf of CEAA editions. A few complaints about this situation have been voiced over the years, along with suggestions on how to proceed. In 1968, for instance, in 'The Descriptive Bibliography of American Authors' (*Studies in Bibliography* 21:1-24), I attempted to explain the deficiencies in the bibliographical treatment of American writers. Four years later Edwin Wolf, 2nd, published a far more important essay, 'Historical Grist for the Bibliographical Mill,' *Studies in Bibliography* 25(1972):29-40. Deploring the 'wall separating bibliography as applied to literary works from bibliography as applied to historical or political works' (p. 37), he demonstrated—through an impressive assemblage of telling examples, all American—that bibliographical analysis is as essential for 'nonliterary' books as it is for 'literary' ones. He noted that most Americanists 'have opted bibliographically and textually for the simplicity of an accurate, but not intensive, description of the single copy at hand' (p. 38), and he ended by asking, 'Isn't it time for a change?' There has been no more eloquent and forceful plea for reforming the bibliographical approach to Americana. It is depressing to recognize, more than a dozen years later, that the situation has scarcely changed.

We can, however, point to a few isolated bright spots. For eighteenth-century studies,¹³ the one that stands out is C. William Miller's great work, *Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia*

¹³ One work that might have been expected to offer some bibliographical analysis of a seventeenth-century book is the two-volume set on the Bay Psalm Book that Zoltán Haraszti published in 1956 (University of Chicago Press), one volume a facsimile and the other Haraszti's commentary (*The Enigma of the Bay Psalm Book*). But his chapter on the printing of the Psalm Book does not draw on physical evidence, and the one on 'The Extant Copies' limits its discussion of differences among copies to whether or not they are 'perfect,' nowhere suggesting the value of collating the texts or examining the paper of those copies. His facsimile is largely of one of the Prince copies, but several pages are substituted from the other Prince copy. He does, somewhat tentatively, recognize that he should provide a record of these pages: 'In his Introduction [to the 1903 facsimile], Wilberforce Eames, the foremost American bibliographer of his time, did not specify the pages prepared from the Lenox copy. . . . Yet the noting of substitutions may be useful.' Nevertheless, in his own facsimile, Haraszti has allowed 'blemishes' to be 'removed by careful opaquing.' To his credit, it must be added, Haraszti understood that, in proofreading, a facsimile must be 'compared, letter by letter, with the original pages.'

Printing, 1728–1766: A Descriptive Bibliography (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974). Although Miller has to deal with 856 items in the main part of this bibliography, he provides in every entry (among other things) a signature collation and information on type, paper, binding, and (when applicable) running-titles, catchwords, ornaments, and plates. These details, furthermore, are based on the examination of multiple copies whenever possible, often a dozen or more and sometimes as many as twenty-eight (for the first book, 1728) or even sixty-four (for the *Cato Major* of 1744). The 453 large double-column pages of descriptive entries (along with the appendixes showing types, ornaments, and binding decorations) provide a major monument for other students of eighteenth-century American books to look to. (Miller's work shows how far bibliography has advanced since that earlier landmark of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bibliography, Thomas J. Holmes's series of bibliographies of the Mathers, published 1931–40—which did, however, include signature collations.) On a lesser scale, but nevertheless significant as an instance of the detailed scrutiny of a piece of eighteenth-century American printing, is Frederick R. Goff's *The John Dunlap Broadside: The First Printing of the Declaration of Independence* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1976). Goff was able to assemble at the Library of Congress seventeen of the twenty-one known copies of the Dunlap broadside for side-by-side comparison; his report tabulates damaged type, offset (from folding when the ink was wet), watermarks (with three beta-radiograph illustrations), and chainlines, as observed in each copy. The discovery of two states of the imprint, as it happens, could have been made without the Hinman Collator and without bringing the copies together; but that fact does not mean that the effort of bringing them together was futile. This investigation was rightly based on the recognition that direct comparison of originals may (indeed, often does) turn up details not likely to be detected in any other way; one cannot know the outcome in

advance. Perhaps it is not surprising that Franklin and the Declaration are the first to receive this attention; the next step is to see to it that the methods employed here are applied to more routine printed items of eighteenth-century America.¹⁴

For the nineteenth century, the situation is somewhat better, but almost all the activity has been concerned with literary figures. Nevertheless, a great deal of information about nineteenth-century bookmaking and publishing is present in the pages of the *Bibliography of American Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955–), begun by Jacob Blanck, continued by Virginia L. Smyers and Michael Winship (vol. 7), and soon to be completed (vol. 8) by Winship.¹⁵ The descriptive entries in this extensive work, though they do not contain the amount of detail that one might wish (even allowing for the scope of the work), do include signature collations and are based on the examination of multiple copies. They are the product of bibliographers who understand book structure and its significance, and they are ordered and classified with the help of physical evidence. Because many of the authors treated are minor, one cannot help but think of the more important

¹⁴ Another notable, if less detailed, study is Thomas R. Adams's *American Independence: The Growth of an Idea* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), which records American Revolutionary pamphlets printed 1764–76. Although the entries are not descriptive of physical evidence in most respects, they do include signature collations; and in his introduction Adams recognizes that the pamphlets deserve 'an exhaustive bibliographical analysis that includes a close comparison of all available copies' (p. xviii), even though he has not chosen to undertake the task himself. I append here another reference to a piece of mine because it sets forth some physical evidence from what might be regarded as routine eighteenth-century American books: 'Press Figures in America,' *Studies in Bibliography* 19(1966):123–60, which calls attention to the presence of press figures in American books and tabulates their occurrence in thirty-seven volumes.

¹⁵ On the basis of his experience in examining large quantities of nineteenth-century American books, Winship has drawn some conclusions about the physical evidence left behind by printing from plates: see 'Printing with Plates in the Nineteenth Century United States,' *Printing History* 5, no. 2(1983):15–26 (esp. 22–23). Two earlier standard surveys of bibliographical problems in nineteenth-century American books are Rollo G. Silver, 'Problems in Nineteenth-Century American Bibliography,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 35(1941):35–47; and Jacob Blanck, 'Problems in the Bibliographical Description of Nineteenth-Century American Books,' 36(1942):124–36.

'nonliterary' writers that have never been examined at all in a truly bibliographical way. But of course it is important to have the minor writers covered, for one learns about the printing and publishing process from unimportant books as well as important ones, and the *BAL* is a storehouse of information about a sizable cross-section of nineteenth-century American books. When it began in 1955 there were no thorough descriptive bibliographies of any major nineteenth-century American author; it provided the first serious attention for many authors, but its coverage was not intended to preclude fuller treatment in separate bibliographies. We now have a few of them, the products of the Pittsburgh Series in Bibliography (University of Pittsburgh Press): *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1978) by C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr.; *Henry David Thoreau* (1982) by Raymond R. Borst; and three by Joel Myerson, *Margaret Fuller* (1978), *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1982), and *Emily Dickinson* (1984). The standards maintained in this series are generally high, the principal entries containing signature collations, descriptions of type, paper, and bindings, and records of copies examined.¹⁶ One can find fault with them in several respects, but only because one sees that they are more sophisticated than previous bibliographical treatments of nineteenth-century American books, and one feels it appropriate to hold them to the highest level of achievement. Historians who deal with 'nonliterary' writers are usually aware that bibliographies of this kind exist for literary figures and believe that such treatment is somehow not necessary for other writers. As long as this notion persists, the record of bibliographical achievement will remain as it now stands, with little of note outside the area normally called 'literature.' One must give credit, however, to Robert H. Becker, whose recent rewriting of the Wagner-Camp work *The Plains & the Rockies* (San Francisco: John Howell—Books,

¹⁶ In some of these bibliographies it is not clear how many of the copies listed as 'located' were actually examined.

1982) is based on a fresh examination of multiple copies of editions of 690 works and does provide signature collations; although his descriptions are not extensive,¹⁷ his work obviously represents a step in the right direction in the treatment of Americana.¹⁸

Other than descriptive bibliographies, the principal repository of physical evidence about nineteenth-century American books is the series of editions that have been produced under the auspices of the Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA), now the Center for Scholarly Editions (CSE), of the Modern Language Association of America. These editions, though they differ among themselves in a number of ways, are descended from the main line of English bibliographical scholarship¹⁹ and therefore are alike in being based on a firm understanding of the essential role that physical evidence plays in textual study. Because the task of elucidating the publishing history of the works to be edited, sorting out the editions and impressions of them and analyzing the physical characteristics of the volumes, had not previously been undertaken, or accomplished satisfactorily, the CEAA editors had to do this work before they were in a position to assess the authority of variant readings turned up in collation. What they did, in other words, was the research for descriptive bibliographies, and many of the results are set forth in essays and lists incorporated in the

¹⁷ One may also question his listing of copies. He says, 'I have cited the location of these [examined] copies, or others whose presence has been factually confirmed, in italics in the location notes' (p. ix). The distinction should not be blurred between copies examined by, and those reported (however 'factually') to, the bibliographer.

¹⁸ Another example of a work that pays attention to, and records, physical evidence is Richard J. Wolfe's *Early American Music Engraving and Printing* (Urbana and New York: University of Illinois Press and the Bibliographical Society of America, 1980), in which an appendix lists 'Watermarks on American Music Sheets, 1793-1830.'

¹⁹ Fredson Bowers's 'Some Principles for Scholarly Editions of Nineteenth-Century American Authors,' read at a conference in 1962 and published in 1964 (*Studies in Bibliography* 17:223-28), suggested the applicability to American writings of the approach Greg set forth in his 'Rationale'; and in 1963 the CEAA was founded on principles deriving from Greg. The resulting editions have since become a focus for theoretical debate about the editing of modern literature.

volumes of their editions.²⁰ For example, the editions of Hawthorne (Ohio State University Press, 1962–), Stephen Crane (University Press of Virginia, 1969–76), and Charles Brockden Brown (Kent State University Press, 1977–) include signature collations and other elements of formal bibliographical descriptions. The *Scarlet Letter* volume uncovers and analyzes the duplicate setting of the last two pages of the first edition of that work; the *Wieland* volume investigates the half-sheet printing of the first edition and offers two tables setting forth possible printing schedules, the whole discussion advancing our knowledge of the important printing shop of T. & J. Swords; the *Typee* volume of the Melville edition (Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1968–) uses an imposition diagram for duodecimo to propose a physical explanation for a textual variant. These are random examples, which could be multiplied from other volumes of these editions, or from the editions of Howells (Indiana University Press, 1968–), Irving (University of Wisconsin Press [later Twayne], 1969–), William Gilmore Simms (University of South Carolina Press, 1969–), Emerson (Harvard University Press, 1971–), Thoreau (Princeton University Press, 1971–), Mark Twain (University of California Press, 1972–), Harold Frederic (Texas Christian University Press, 1977–), James Russell Lowell (Northern Illinois University Press, 1977–), and Cooper (State University of New York Press, 1980–).

Following the pioneering lead of the edition of John Dewey (Southern Illinois University Press, 1969–), several editions of this kind in the field of American philosophy are now under way (the William James edition [Harvard University

²⁰ There have been a few separate articles of analytical bibliography devoted to nineteenth-century American books, such as Oliver L. Steele's 'On the Imposition of the First Edition of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*,' *Library*, 5th ser. 17 (1962):250–55, which analyzes the patterns of rough edges of leaves in untrimmed copies to determine format. But most such discussions relating to American books occur in the editorial matter appended to scholarly editions.

Press, 1975—] is well along); and it is to be hoped that scholars in other disciplines begin to see the necessity for such editions in their fields.²¹ All these CEAA/CSE volumes are naturally important for the texts they provide, but they should not be overlooked as a source of printing and book-trade information: one can find in them the fullest bibliographical analyses and descriptions available for certain books; the discussions and lists of variants provide some of the data for refining our conception of what nineteenth-century American publishers did to the texts of the works that passed through their offices; and the essays are filled with details that help one to understand the international copyright situation and other aspects of the business of publishing in nineteenth-century America. The number of books covered by these CEAA/CSE editions is not yet sizable enough to support large generalizations; but the volumes are impressively demonstrating the inseparability of physical bibliography, publishing history, and textual criticism.

III

It is clear that the examination of the physical evidence in American books has scarcely begun. Despite all that has been written on the book in America, the vast body of printing evidence that lies embedded in the physical product itself has hardly been touched. But it is there, waiting to be extracted, in every book we pick up. There is thus a multiplicity of important tasks that need to be undertaken. Any interested scholar will find here a wide-open field, in which it is still possible to be

²¹ There has of course been great activity in the last thirty years in the editing of the writings of nineteenth-century American statesmen and other historical figures. Most of the texts in these editions have come from manuscripts of letters and journals; but occasionally a printed text had to be dealt with, and in those instances the editors, accustomed to handling manuscripts (how well is not at issue here), frequently did not understand what the editing of printed texts entailed. Cf. Edwin Wolf's remark (in the essay cited above) that Julian Boyd and Leonard W. Labaree (editors of *Jefferson and Franklin*) 'never questioned the validity of the text of only a single copy of any printed work' (p. 29). These editions do not generally make a contribution to printing and publishing history.

a pioneer. Those who become analytical bibliographers of American books, though they will be working in the shadow of the bibliographers of English literature, will make discoveries that will affect the thinking of all who have occasion after them to be concerned with American printing history. The tasks to be performed are not necessarily different in general terms from those that have long been recognized: we need more regional imprint bibliographies, more bibliographies of genres and of authors, more histories and bibliographies of individual printers and publishers, more essays setting forth in detail the production history of a single volume, more studies of the textual history of particular works. An understanding of the importance of physical evidence, however, will cause these standard tasks to be approached in a new way, and the resulting scholarship will be qualitatively different.

Consider national and regional imprint bibliographies, which provide the basic record of printed output. The eighteenth-century catalogue resulting from NAIP, when completed, will certainly be the foundation for bibliographies covering smaller areas; but those bibliographies will still be needed to provide fuller detail than the comprehensive catalogue can be expected to include. For the nineteenth century, state (or, in some instances, city) imprint bibliographies have traditionally been fundamental, since there was no counterpart to Evans, and they will continue to be so. The checklists produced by Shaw and Shoemaker and their successors are, as their compilers recognize, very tentative and preliminary (but nonetheless essential) efforts; and when more sophisticated catalogues of nineteenth-century imprints appear, they are likely at first to be simply union catalogues of library holdings. (The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue project, under way at Oxford, will in its first phase go only to 1815 and include the holdings of six libraries.)²² For the entire period,

²² See G. Averley and F. J. G. Robinson, 'The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue,' *Library Association Rare Books Group Newsletter*, no. 22 (November 1983): 15-20.

both before and after 1800, there will continue to be a need for regional bibliographies of imprints that take up manageable enough units of material for bibliographical analysis of some depth to be made. Many of the earlier state imprint bibliographies have long been recognized as unsatisfactory, and many segments of the total record have never been attempted at all. Work to remedy these deficiencies should obviously proceed, but it should proceed with an understanding of physical evidence and the role of analytical bibliography in the study of book history. At a minimum, entries should be based on an examination of multiple copies, with the aim of detecting and reporting issues, printings, and editions; they should also include a signature collation, even if other physical facts, such as information about type and paper, are not noted in detail. There has been a tendency to exaggerate the importance of title pages and to undervalue other aspects of the physical book. (Bibliographers of Americana—I should in fairness point out—are not the only ones guilty of placing excessive reliance on title pages.) Books are made up of parts, and a title page is not sufficient identification for a whole book. Fredson Bowers's advice that one should describe books as if they had no title leaves is worth heeding.²³ What I am suggesting, therefore, is that regional imprint bibliographies of the future should carry through more consistently the line of thinking that underlies their basic structure. The idea of assembling a record of the printed output of a particular area during a particular time emphasizes production history, not the intellectual content of the items produced; but many imprint bibliographers, having taken that initial step toward production history, take few additional steps in that direction, proceeding instead to treat the material from what might be called a literary, rather than a bibliographical, point of view. The imprint bibli-

²³ 'Purposes of Descriptive Bibliography, with Some Remarks on Methods,' *Library*, 5th ser. 8 (1953):1-22; reprinted in his *Essays in Bibliography, Text, and Editing* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1975), pp. 111-34.

ographies we need in the future will differ from those of the past not in the way they divide the total body of material but in the approach they reflect. As they increasingly recognize and exploit bibliographical evidence, they will become livelier and more rewarding as pieces of historical scholarship.

Bibliographies arranged according to such other principles as genre (fiction, almanacs, statutes, primers, and so on) or author will also continue to be useful, and they, too, will become more valuable as they emerge from this process of seeking and recognizing the evidence inherent in printed artifacts. From the point of view of printing and publishing history, however, such organizing principles are not as basic as an arrangement by region, for they emphasize the intellectual content of books, whereas regional lists bring together books produced by the limited number of printers and publishers working within a particular geographical area and thus enable one to search for characteristics of an individual firm or of a number of firms situated in proximity to one another. This point was perceived by Robert Proctor nearly a century ago in his epoch-making work on incunabula: he saw that grouping books (in chronological order) by printer and then assembling those printer-lists by town ('Proctor order,' as it came to be called) would place each book in the context that would best illuminate its production. Facts learned in connection with one book might be relevant to understanding the production history of others close to it in origin; and printer and date might be assigned to books previously lacking such identification. This principle is as valid for more recent books as it is for incunabula. Certain kinds of physical facts, it must be granted, do emerge from other arrangements; for instance, the conventional formats for poetry or fiction or drama in particular periods might be more readily discernible from bibliographies of those genres. But this information could also be made available through indexing, when the basic arrangement emphasizes printing history. Debates about the relative merits of different

arrangements are rather futile, in any case, in the age of the computer. If descriptions are entered into a data-base and intelligently provided with a wide range of access points, one can always procure a print-out of whatever category suits one's purpose at the moment. The emphasis is ultimately, therefore, on the amount of information given in individual entries; and there is no getting around the fact that studying a book in the context of others produced in the same shop and the same area will be most revealing. Studies of the output of particular printers or publishers—a subclass of regional imprint bibliographies—are thus what our hopes for the future must rest on, for they can be pursued to a depth generally not feasible for the broader regional studies. Whether they take the form of bibliographies or of narrative histories is fundamentally of little moment. We do need to have bibliographies with discrete entries for ease of reference and for manipulation in data-bases; but the form that bibliographies take should not blind us to the fact that they are indeed histories, involving the same questions about emphasis, selection of detail, and evidentiary standards as other scholarly histories.²⁴ Bibliographies of printers and publishers, like the best modern author bibliographies, are forms of biography.²⁵ They can vary in the fullness of their details; but whatever outward shape they take—whether continuous narrative prose or a series of formulaic statements—they will be deficient if the details they provide do not spring from a truly bibliographical point of view, a recognition that a bibliographical enterprise entails the use of bibliographical evidence.

As detailed studies of individual printers and publishers, incorporating the results of the analysis of the physical evidence found in the books they produced, begin to line up on the shelf

²⁴ See G. T. Tanselle, 'The Arrangement of Descriptive Bibliographies,' *Studies in Bibliography* 37 (1984): 1-38.

²⁵ One indication of the growing recognition of this point is Dan H. Laurence's Engelhard Lecture, *A Portrait of the Author as a Bibliography* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1983). See also the essays cited in note 6 above.

(and we are a long way from having a substantial shelf of them), they will form the foundation for various additional kinds of work. They will make possible, for example, new generalizations that will cause the broader accounts of American printing and publishing to need revision. One sort of generalization that will be greatly facilitated is the description of physical features common to the printed matter of a particular area at a given time—the range of papers and typefaces used, the wording of imprints and title pages, the placement and style of signatures, page numbers, and footnotes, the presence or absence of running titles, and so on. A brilliant example of what can be done along these lines, though it is concerned only with British and continental books, is R. A. Sayce's 'Compositorial Practices and the Localization of Printed Books, 1530–1800,' in the *Library*, 5th ser. 21 (1966):1–45 (reprinted as a pamphlet, with additions and corrections, by the Oxford Bibliographical Society in 1979). Sayce's work provides only a start, but no comparable start has been published for American books.²⁶ The kinds of generalizations that grow out of physical evidence are not, however, limited to physical points. Analytical bibliography can uncover—with greater or lesser fullness and certainty, depending on the evidence in each case—such details of the printing process as how many compositors set type for a particular book, whether they set type-pages in consecutive numerical order or in the order needed for the press, what the procedure for proofreading was, and how many copies were in the edition. Generalizations about such matters are naturally important for printing history, but they have been scarce in most historical studies of American books, because the available underlying work has focused more critically on archival documents (such as printers' ledgers) than on the printed products. Recognition that the

²⁶ The *BAL* could have served as a reasonable basis for such a survey if it had recorded more physical details. Even as it stands, a thorough index to the *BAL*, including references to bibliographical points, would provide a worthwhile start on study of the localization of American books.

latter constitute the primary evidence will add a new dimension to printing history, which will then deal with the process of printing as well as the business of printing.

Indeed, it will be able to explore more fully than in the past the relation of the two. For considerations arising from the examination of physical evidence lead directly into the broadest concerns of economic, social, and intellectual history. Compositor analysis, for instance, enriches what can be learned from external sources about the work force, just as details of proofreading practice reflect economic as well as intellectual standards. When bibliographical analysis helps to assign responsibility for a textual alteration to the author or to the publisher, it is contributing to a knowledge, in the former case, of the writer's process of thought or, in the latter, of the publisher's motivation and perceived audience. The analysis of textual variants is important both for the history of ideas and the history of reading. Such analysis, it is worth emphasizing, need not be preparatory to the publication of an edition. Although we do not by any means have in progress scholarly editions of all the works that deserve such editions, we should also recognize that there are thousands of works of insufficient stature or interest to warrant republication in scholarly editions. Nevertheless, study of the textual history of all these works would indeed be useful. Every published work takes its place, however modest, in intellectual history; and every study that helps to reveal how the text of a particular work reached its published form and how it changed in later editions is a contribution to our understanding of intellectual history and is part of the groundwork for broader historical generalizations. On the list of desiderata for future research, it is hard to imagine a more important category than essays of this kind, detailing the printing, publishing, and textual histories (necessarily intertwined) of individual works. The research is the same as what underlies a scholarly edition, but it is no less valuable for being pursued independently of any proposed edition. As such

essays accumulate, we shall begin to have evidence (unavailable now in significant quantity) documenting not only printing history but also the rise of the entrepreneurial role of the publisher and the ensuing influence of the publisher in determining what works—and what texts of those works—reach the public.

Although physical evidence is the primary evidence for printing history, it must naturally be supplemented by any other reliable evidence available. Secondary documents may at times be proved incorrect by the physical evidence of the artifacts themselves. But those documents may also preserve information that one would have no way of ascertaining from the artifacts; indeed, they are the primary evidence for some aspects of the publishing operation that disseminated the printed objects. One obvious source of this kind is printers' and publishers' archives, and what is urgently needed in this area is a guide to the locations where such archives can be found—a guide that (one hopes) would stimulate more publications like those of the Ticknor & Fields and Carey & Lea cost books. The Bibliographical Society of America is looking into the feasibility of providing a guide along these lines. Another source, insufficiently used up to now, is the copyright records, the bulk of which is housed in the Library of Congress.²⁷ At present the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress is investigating the publication of the pre-1870 records in machine-readable form—another project that deserves the support of all historians of American books. A third source is contemporary lists of books such as catalogues of booksellers and of private or institutional libraries. Some use has already been made of such catalogues by students of the history of reading, and Robert B. Winans is producing an important checklist of this material through 1800,²⁸ which is bound to stimulate further study.

²⁷ See G. T. Tanselle, 'Copyright Records and the Bibliographer,' *Studies in Bibliography* 22(1969):77-124.

²⁸ The first segment of which has been published as *A Descriptive Checklist of Book Catalogues Separately Printed in America, 1693-1800* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1981). This work does, by the way, include signature collations

Some of the difficulties of interpreting catalogues as evidence of what people actually read are well known; but there are other difficulties, not as often regarded, in determining precisely what the catalogue entries refer to. All too often, the historians who turn to these catalogues think only of the works mentioned in the entries but do not (because they have not been trained to) consider the specific physical entities, the particular editions, being cited. This problem arises to some extent in the use of any documents external to the books themselves, but it is particularly acute in connection with catalogues, for the entries in them may involve more unknowns (such as publisher or printer and date) than is generally the case with printers' archives or copyright records. A more widespread understanding of how books were produced in the past and how bibliographical evidence can be analyzed will significantly affect future studies of intellectual history. Book catalogues of all kinds obviously have much to offer the historian of reading tastes and the intellectual historian who must know what ideas were current in a given place at a given time. Such historians, however, have been known to accept entries in lists or catalogues without asking whether those items really ever existed, or, if they did exist, what form—or, more likely, forms—of the text they contained. But these documents must be approached critically: one cannot simply use the titles listed in catalogues without being prepared to examine what happened to those books in the stages that preceded publication, what their presence in the catalogues means, and whether apparently distinct editions of a listed title are in fact different editions.

This point deserves some elaboration, for the relation of textual investigation to cultural history has been neglected. Even historians who have recognized the need to identify the editions referred to in catalogue entries have sometimes been guilty of inadequate discrimination. It is not sufficient, for example, simply to segregate abridgments from complete texts. Not every abridgment of a given work is identical, obviously; neither, for that matter, is every edition that pur-

ports to contain the full text. If a crucial passage is mangled or omitted in certain popular abridged editions, that fact would be important in assessing just what kind of influence the work would have. Furthermore, children's abridgments should not be underestimated: it is well known that children's books have a profound influence. And one cannot assume that the audience for them is only children. Adults do read children's books—if only to their children—and the abridged form of a classic prepared for children may be the only form certain adults know and may have a greater influence in a particular society than the original text. Similarly, it is often recognized that the texts of translations must be scrutinized if one is to examine the influence of particular works in foreign countries. But the point is that any text of a work must be looked at carefully before one can assess its role: one cannot talk about the impact of *works* without knowing what *texts* of those works are involved.²⁹

What I have been saying, in commenting on these several kinds of research, is simply that they need to be informed with a new point of view. And at the heart of that view is the recognition that a critical approach to physical evidence is as crucial for dealing with printed matter as with manuscripts. Many historians recognize that to read a manuscript properly they must take into account its paper, its ink, and the process of its inscription;³⁰ but it appears to be more difficult for some of

²⁹ Another instance of the general point: one cannot take the recurrence of the same titles in booksellers' lists as a sign of popularity without knowing what editions are referred to. It may rather be a sign of unpopularity, indicating that the books were not selling and were still on hand. Of course, when it can be established that the references are to separate editions, there is some ground for thinking that a certain demand for those works may have existed, but even then the relative size of the editions is an important factor, though often such figures are not known very precisely. In any case, it is unquestionably true that some books remained in stock many years. For these reasons I think that the term 'reading tastes' is not always what the historians who use it are really talking about. Both words may be wrong: the 'reading' of books may not be the subject so much as the availability of books; and 'tastes' may exaggerate the degree of choice involved and the extent to which readers' interests dictate the kinds of works that are made available.

them to see printed items as documents whose physical features are similarly essential for an informed reading of the texts they contain. It is ironic that Lawrence Wroth should have advocated curtailing the record of physical evidence in order to concentrate on the meaning and significance of texts, as if the one were an alternative to the other. Although he maintained that historical texts did not demand the editorial labors that literary texts did, he nevertheless argued for a 'shift of emphasis' from 'minutely exact transcription and elaborate physical description of the book' to 'research into textual history and relationships' (p. 111). Description of form, he said, is only half the job; the rest concerns the text, 'the treasure which the earthen vessel contains'—'the circumstances which brought the text into being; the relationship between circumstances, author, and composition; the publication progress of the book; subsequent editions or issues; or, its passage into oblivion' (p. 106). Everyone would agree that these are important matters. But what Wroth seems, strangely, not to have understood is that 'elaborate physical description' furthers the investigation of such points. The more one learns about the 'earthen vessel' the more one understands the 'treasure' within it. Indeed, one has access to the treasure only because it has been preserved in the vessel, and a prerequisite for assessing the contents is an investigation of how they have been affected by the particular manner of their transmission. The relationship between physical description and what Wroth saw as a shifted emphasis is not dissimilar to the recently debated opposition between bibliographical analysis and the history of books in society. The comment one must make on the former applies equally to the latter: the analysis of the physical object is not a narrow or limited pursuit, since it opens the way for soundly

³⁰ Although there are many others who seemingly do not understand even this, judging from the number who are content to rely entirely on photocopies of manuscripts and to go into print without ever having examined the originals. (This group includes, shockingly, some of the editors of statesmen's papers.)

based studies of the intellectual contents of those objects and their influence. A great body of evidence stands ready to be tapped: practically every time that I have compared two or three copies of an early American book, or traced such features as press figures or running titles through even a single copy, I have found some variation or problem worthy of further analysis. Because problems of this kind in American books have not been tackled over the years, the approach of a great many historians to American printed artifacts is still naive and essentially uncritical. The fundamental task for the future is the development of a more bibliographically sophisticated view, one that recognizes the necessity for applying to printed artifacts the critical scrutiny that scholarly inquiry presupposes.

To examine the impact of printed matter on society—the effect that the printing press, through its products, has had on the course of events—is a principal element of the approach to the history of books often referred to as *histoire du livre*. It is not usual, however, for historians in this general tradition to be concerned with examining the physical evidence present in books or with collating texts and analyzing textual variants.³¹ But book-production history and textual history, themselves intimately related, are integral to cultural history. The effort to understand how printed matter has affected society cannot divorce itself from the evidence that emerges from a study of the manufacturing and textual history of each book. I hope it is clear I am not claiming that literary scholars in general understand these points and historical scholars do not. Certainly many literary scholars do not understand them, and I am simply suggesting that there should be more recognition of the need to discuss these questions among scholars in all fields. It just happens that certain literary scholars are the ones who

³¹ See John Feather, 'Cross-Channel Currents: Historical Bibliography and *l'histoire du Livre*,' *Library*, 6th ser. 2(1980):1–15; and G. T. Tanselle, *The History of Books as a Field of Study* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1981).

have taken fullest advantage thus far of the fact that the texts of books are affected by the physical means through which they are transmitted. But this insight is one that applies equally to all written and printed communication. There is no reason why belles-lettres require more attention to textual matters than any other form of communication. Anyone serious about understanding what a work says must be interested in any evidence that bears on determining what words and punctuation the text of that work contained in specific appearances, and on judging what words and punctuation it was meant to contain by its author. Establishing these matters normally involves knowing the printing and publishing practices of the time, and knowing therefore how to evaluate the primary evidence preserved in the printed items themselves. Studying the role of printed matter in society is a complex process requiring many different approaches; surely the establishment of texts, and the analysis leading to that establishment, are central elements in this basic task of historical understanding.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.