

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PRESSES IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

WHEN PHILIP GASKELL made his census of bibliographical presses in 1963–4¹ he was able to locate 25, all in the English-speaking world, and five of them in the antipodes: 9 University of Auckland, 11 University of Queensland, 13 University of Otago, 16 Victoria University of Wellington, and 19 University of Sydney. Though the first bibliographical press dates from 1927, when Carl Rollins established The Bibliographic Press at Yale, 16 of Dr Gaskell's 25 belong to the period 1960 to 1963; as he observed, at the time of his writing there was 'something of a boom in bibliographical presses in the universities of the English-speaking world.' This boom he identified both as part of the larger phenomenon of the private-press movement, which was bullish at the time, and as an indication of the improved climate towards bibliography. His assumption that 'more seem certain to follow' may have been borne out in the English-speaking world as a whole, but in Australia and New Zealand the boom of the early 1960s was followed by a hiatus of over a decade before the new boom of the mid-1970s.

The purpose of the following account is three-fold: to bring up to date the record of the established presses; to describe the new foundations; and to provide information about the work being done at the presses, an aspect not covered by Dr Gaskell. The account is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to all the universities of Australia and New Zealand in February 1977. I am grateful to the various founders and continuers for supplying the information; wherever practicable I have used their words without specific attribution and, I hope, without distorting their intent. Two of the presses included are perhaps not primarily bibliographical, but I have preferred to err on the side of inclusiveness.

The purpose of the bibliographical press is probably sufficiently well known to require only brief recapitulation. In Dr Gaskell's words:

By a 'bibliographical press' is meant a workshop or laboratory which is carried on chiefly for the purpose of demonstrating and investigating the printing techniques of the past by means of setting type by hand, and of printing from it on a simple press.

And the rationale for such 'demonstrating and investigating' is still best expressed in R.B. McKerrow's statement of 1913:²

It would, I think, be an excellent thing if all who propose to edit an Elizabethan work from contemporary printed texts could be set to compose a sheet or two in as exact facsimile as possible of some Elizabethan octavo or quarto, and to print it on a press constructed on the Elizabethan model. Elementary instruction in the mechanical details of book-production need occupy but a very few hours of a University course of literature, and it would, I believe, if the course were intended to turn out scholars capable of serious work, be time well spent. It would teach students not to regard a book as a collection of separate leaves of paper attached in some mysterious manner to a leather back, nor to think that the pages are printed one after

another beginning at the first and proceeding regularly to the last. They would have constantly and clearly before their minds all the processes through which the matter of the work before them has passed, from its first being written down by the pen of its author to its appearance in the finished volume, and would know when and how mistakes are likely to arise; while they would be constantly on the watch for those little pieces of evidence which are supplied by the actual form and "make-up" of a book and which are often of the highest value, in that they can hardly ever be "faked."

1. **University of Auckland. Mount Pleasant Press, Department of English.**

Founded 1958 by Dr W.J. Cameron, under the auspices of the Department of English, as the Auckland University Bibliographical Press.

Press: Albion, V. and J. Figgis, 1863, serial no. 4224, double-demy.

Type: Monotype 239 Perpetua, 12pt. roman, italic and bold.

Function: Teaching bibliography to students enrolled in the Methods and Techniques of Scholarship class (M.A. in English). The encouragement of bibliographical scholarship.

Work produced: Some jobbing; (a) Bibliographical Pamphlet series; (b) Aids to Literary Research.

Examples: (a) *New Zealand's First Printing Press. The Story of the Mission Press brought to Kerikeri in 1830 and back to Australia in 1844*, by W.J. Cameron, 1959.

Northland Newspapers. A Contribution towards a bibliography of newspapers published in Auckland Province before the abolition of the Provinces, 1876, by W.J. Cameron, 1960.

An Index to 'Book. A Miscellany from the Caxton Press, Christchurch', by Olive Johnson, 1960.

Denis Glover. A Catalogue of his separately-published work, by Olive Johnson, 1960.

An Annotated Bibliography of the Sponges of New Zealand, by Patricia R. Bergquist, 1962.

Centenary of a Press. The History in Auckland of an Albion handpress... now used for teaching bibliography in the Department of English, by W.J. Cameron, 1963.

Notes: From the basement of the old Mount Pleasant Hospital, which had become the University Registry, the Press moved to the Vaile Building and then to the new University Library, where it is still located.

'On 20 January 1959 it began its career as a teaching aid and as a press for publishing bibliographical pamphlets. The press has also been used to print posters for student clubs, invitations, bookplates, Christmas cards, etc., but its main purpose (apart from the practical demonstration of old printing techniques) has always been the encouragement of bibliographical scholarship. A series of pamphlets embodying the various techniques as applied to subjects of New Zealand interest was planned. It was hoped that each one would serve a useful purpose in itself, but at the same time would stimulate students to emulation. Any original bibliographical research done as a result could be published on the press. . . . As bibliographical research into New Zealand topics was obviously not being stimulated in Auckland. . . it was decided to complete the series with a history of the press, to be published on the centenary of the casting of the press. As the labour of publishing and distributing such material seemed too great for the student volunteers who operated the press, it was also decided to launch a new series for the use of students of the Department of English, University of Auckland to be called 'Aids to Literary Research'.'*(Centenary of a Press)*

Information for the period after 1963 is unavailable.

2. University of Queensland. Shapcott Press, Department of English.

Founded 1961 by Harrison Bryan, then University Librarian, when the press was donated to the University by the Shapcott family; continued by the library staff; transferred to the Department of English in 1973, and continued by Martin Duwell, under the auspices of the department.

Presses: Columbian, Thomas Long, Edinburgh, after 1869 (?). Proofing press.

Type: Times, Pastonchi, Gill Sans, Caslon, Imprint etc. in a variety of point sizes.

Function: Teaching bibliography to fourth year honours students in English.

Work produced: Before 1973 some limited edition works were produced; since 1973 only some jobbing work of the Makar Press.

3. University of Otago. The Bibliography Room, University Library.

Founded 1961 by David G. Esplin, then Reference Librarian, and Keith I.D. Maslen, of the Department of English; continued by Keith Maslen, under the auspices of the University Library.

Presses: Albion, Hopkinson and Cope, 1845, serial no. 2245, foolscap; Columbian, Thomas Long, Edinburgh, c.1849–83, royal; Phoenix Presse, J.G. Schelter & Giesecke, Leipzig, no date, a quarto treadle platen in working order but kept for display only; Alexandra, K.T. Wimble, no date, no number (patent 1342), double-demy, in storage; Adana quarto horizontal, serial no. 2401.

Type: The main range is Monotype Garamond, 10 to 24 pt. roman and italic, with titling to 36 pt.

Other equipment: A collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century type ornaments, wood and metal cut ornaments, electros, and wooden type.

Function: Teaching bibliography to post-graduate English students; for occasional use by students and staff generally; as a working museum of printing; for production of occasional publications.

Work produced: Apart from jobbing (cards, posters, covers etc.) there have been editions of New Zealand poets produced more or less annually.

Examples: *Ragamuffin Scarecrow*, by Ruth Dallas, with drawings by Els Noordhof and others, 1969.

Jerusalem sonnets, by James K. Baxter, 1970.

The Otago University Review 1888–1971, ed. Kevin Jones and Brent Southgate, printed by John McIndoe Ltd., 1972.

Bowyer's Chapel Rules, ed. Keith I.D. Maslen, 1976.

Notes: The original name, The Backside Press, was dropped when a move was made in 1966 from the wash-house at the back of the old English Department to quarters in the new University Library.

There is no settled policy of publication, nor invariable method of production. Often works have been set in the Bibliography Room and the formes printed commercially elsewhere. For some an IBM electric typewriter has been used. In other cases all the work has been done by hand on the premises.

4. Victoria University of Wellington. Wai-te-ata Press, nos. 10 and 12 Wai-te-ata Road.

Founded 1962 by D.F. McKenzie, under the auspices of the Department of English.

Presses: Stanhope, 'Walker fecit', 1813, serial no. 108, royal, built for, and on indefinite loan from, the Cambridge University Press (illustrated in Philip Gaskell, *A New introduction to bibliography* (Oxford, 1972), p.199); Furnivall Folio Cylinder Press, handfed, stop-cylinder, c. 1900, 17½" x 22½"; Kelly, suction feed, two-revolution, Style B Automatic, c.1923, 17" x 22"; John Haddon & Co. hand-operated bench platen, chase 9½" x 6½"; other presses in store include Thompson jobbing platen, Cropper treadle platen (1866), two five-by-three Adanas, etc.

Type: The main founts are Monotype 203 Van Dijk, 156 Garamond, 362 Gill Sans in all point sizes. There are some 200 cases of metal type in a great variety of designs, and some 70 founts of wood type.

Other equipment: 24" guillotine, heavy foot-stapler, perforator, punch, blocking press, etc.

Function: Teaching bibliography to graduate students; demonstration to librarianship students from the National Library; informal printing by students enrolled in the Techniques of Literary Scholarship class (B.A. Hons. in English); general posters, programmes, notices, tickets, etc. for student clubs when time and labour permit.

Work produced: (a) Books of poems; (b) the periodical *Words*, all issues printed, collated and bound at the Press; (c) music scores by New Zealand composers, 20 scores in all, reproduced by photo-offset from original MSS, covers and title pages by the Press, and all published with the Wai-te-ata imprint; (d) editions of student texts, letterpress or by photo-offset.

Examples: (a) *Sanctuary of Spirits* and *Blue Rain*, by Alistair Campbell.

Domestic Interiors, by Peter Bland.

A Sense of Place, by Charles Doyle.

Recreations, by Iain Lonie.

Back-to-front runner : poems, by Daryl McLaren.

A Grammar of Dreams, by Kevin Ireland.

Occasional Verses, by James Bertram.

How to take off your clothes at the picnic, by Bill Manhire – forthcoming.

Willie the Rich, by Martyn Sanderson.

The Junkies and the Fuzz, by James K. Baxter.

(b) *Words* : Wai-te-ata Studies in Literature, series terminated after four issues.

No. IV (in print) was a Festschrift for Professor I.A. Gordon.

(d) *Everyman*; Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience* – both letterpress.

Venus and Adonis; Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie* – both photo-offset, in production.

Notes: The Wai-te-ata Press is essentially self-financing. The University provides space, heating, lighting, and occasional grants for such items as renewing rollers on the motorised machines, but there is no annual grant as such. All paper, ink etc. are bought out of the Press's own fund, which operates rather like a student club account. The fund is replenished by receipts from sales, and is kept at an adequate level by the income from texts such as *Everyman*. These out-of-copyright texts can be produced at a very low cost compared with the regular trade editions, and a small mark-up on each yields a modest income for the Press to carry out its main function without requiring much in the way of further support. Wai-te-ata is 'bibliographical' in that it demonstrates the *procedures* of letterpress printing, both by hand and by power-driven presses. It has always been the policy of the Press, however, to contribute more widely within the community by promoting New Zealand poetry and, between 1967 and 1972, New Zealand music.

5. University of Sydney. Piscator Press, Fisher Library.

Founded 1963 as the Fisher Press by Harrison Bryan, University Librarian, two presses having been acquired in 1961 by Dr Andrew D. Osborn, then University Librarian, from the N.S.W. Government Printer.

Press: Improved Albion, Wimple, 1879, serial no. 1385, 26" x 20½".

Type: Albertus, 24, 36 and 48 pt.; Bembo, 10, 12, 18 and 24 pt.; Blackletter, 12 and 24 pt.; Garamond, 8, 10, 12 and 30 pt.; Gill Sans, 6 pt.; 18, 24, 30 and 36 pt.; Times, 11 pt.

Function: Mostly informal printing by a group largely composed of Library staff. Regular demonstrations to M.A. English students, library school students and others (nearly all from other institutions). No formal teaching or research involvement to date.

Work produced: Some ephemera (concert programmes, Christmas cards); mostly pamphlets in series, none more ambitious than eight pages.

Examples: (As Fisher Press:)

A Press is born.

Friends of Sydney University Library, Secretary's Report, 1963–64.

To Callirhoe, by Ugo Foscolo.

(As Piscator Press:)

The Sepulchres, by Ugo Foscolo.

Friends of Sydney University Library, Secretary's Report, 1964–65, 1965–66, 1966–67.

Quartet [a programme].

Design for a Bookplate.

Collection building through collection buying.

Significant Rare Books – I. A General introduction and John Milton. A Select list.

Significant Rare Books – II. Hugh MacDonal and The Macdonald Collection.

An Event of some significance for scholarship. Ceremony of Presentation of the Two Millionth Book.

Souvenir of a Print-in at the Fisher Library.

Note: The second press, Alexandra, Wimple, 1878, serial no. 1355, was sold some years ago to the then Assistant Curator of the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, University of Sydney.

6. University of Adelaide. Barr Smith Library.

Founded 1968 when J.A. Colmer bought the press and gave it to the Department of English; continued by Dr Alan Brissenden under the auspices of the Barr Smith Library and the Department of English.

Press: Imperial, Barrett, 1853, demy.

Type: Bembo, 14pt. roman; Garamond Light, 12 pt. roman and italic; Univers, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 24 pt.; Darwin, 12, 18, 24 and 30 pt.

Function: Teaching bibliography to Honours English and post-graduate Library Studies students; occasional printing by poets.

Work produced: Bibliographical exercises as part of courses; poetry.

Notes: The press has been in use for teaching purposes in 1973, 1974 and 1976. The old type (Univers and Darwin) came mainly from a closing-down newspaper office at Kadina. The new type was cast by the S.A. Department of Further Education's School of Graphic Art, two members of whose staff gave guest lectures during the 1976 bibliography course.

7. **Australian National University. Open Door Press, Department of English.**

Founded 1974 by David Brooks and Alan Gould, under the auspices of the Department of English.

Press: Chandler and Price treadle-operated platen-press, 12" x 8".

Type: Garamond, 12, 18 and 42 pt.; Times Roman, 10 and 14 pt.

Function: Principally producing limited editions of poetry.

Work produced: Poetry in book, foldout and broadsheet form. Some job-work for the Department of English and the Humanities Research Centre is done. Advertisements of meetings, bookplates etc. Profits go back into the Press to renew equipment, buy paper etc.

Examples: *The Skald Mosaic; a sequence of poems*, by Alan Gould, illustrations by Anne Kent, 1975.

Nebuchadnezzar; a sequence of poems, by Kevin Hart, cover illustration by Arthur Boyd, 1977.

8. **Monash University. The Bibliographical Laboratory, University Library.**

Founded 1976 under the auspices of a committee (inoperative) which includes a member of the University Library and a member of the Graduate School of Librarianship.

Presses: Albion, Hopkinson and Cope, 1857, serial no. 3372, super royal, on indefinite loan from the Library Council of Victoria; Wade treadle-operated platen-press, 13¼" x 9¼".

Type: Monotype 270 Bembo, 12 and 14 pt. roman and italic, 30 pt. roman.

Other equipment: Proofing press, stamping press etc.

Function: Informal printing by librarians. Teaching bibliography to students enrolled in the Aims and Methods of Literary Research class (fourth year honours in English) and the Bibliography and Textual Scholarship class (Master of Librarianship).

Work produced: Some jobbing and mementos; reprinting literary works for the purpose of teaching the techniques of hand-setting and printing.

Notes: The press, a long-standing aim, came into being when space was freed in the University Library and when the newly-founded Graduate School of Librarianship received the Albion press on indefinite loan from the Library Council of Victoria. There is a museum aspect too: included are a late nineteenth-century David Payne Wharfedale stop-cylinder and a double-demy Columbian (plate missing) on display in the Library foyer. Work is in progress to build a wooden press of the Bleau type from the specifications brought from University College London by Professor Arthur Brown (see Gaskell's no. 3).

9. University of Canterbury. Underoak Press, School of Fine Arts.

Founded 1976 by Max Hailstone under the auspices of the School of Fine Arts.

Presses: Kobold platen, 13½" x 9½" serial no. 19668; Farley proofing press, 24" x 18", serial no. XA4262.

Type: Joanna, 12 and 18 pt. roman and italic; Univers, full range of point sizes; Baskerville, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 18 and 36 pt.

Function: Teaching hand-setting, printing and simple book design. Also used for producing student designs for corporate identities and other design projects.

Work produced: Small books and student projects. Experimental settings with slight typographical variation.

Examples: *A Rural Coquette*, 1976. (edition of 100)

Lee – A Science Fiction poem, by Rob Jackaman, 1976. (edition of 50)

An Account of the horrid murder of Mr Widdington, 1977. (edition of 30)

I suggest that war is a crime, by Rudolph Igopas, 1977. (edition of 50)

Notes: Other presses within the Printmaking Department include three hand litho presses, one Albion press and three etching presses.

10. University of Tasmania, New Albion Press, Department of English.

Founded 1977 by the Department of English.

Press: Albion, J. and J. Barrett, 1837, given to the University by *The Examiner*.

Type: Wellington, 8 to 36 pt. roman and italic; Drew, 8 to 36 pt.; Modern No. 20, 6 to 48 pt. roman and italic; Stradivarius, 18 and 24 pt.; Caslon O.F. Heavy, 14 to 36 pt.; Grottesque, 9, 14 to 48 pt.; Fry's Ornamented, 30 pt.; Saxon Black, 18 to 48 pt.; Jensen 14 line; De Vinne 24 line; various wooden and brass founts.

Function: Teaching bibliography and typography to fourth year honours students in English. Printing results of bibliographical research in Victorian fiction, and other works of literary, scholarly and occasional interest.

Work produced: Only posters, broadsheets etc. have so far been produced, but there are plans for a collection of poetry and a bibliography of the valuable collection of nineteenth century fiction in the Mechanics' Institute Library now held in the Northern Regional Library in Launceston.

Notes: The Press has recently received a representative selection of metal type from the old English type foundry, Stephenson Blake. This will enable the users of the press to set up a range of facsimiles of literary texts produced from c.1700 to 1900.

11. **Massey University, Department of English.**

At the time of the enquiry the Press was in the process of being set up, under the auspices of the English Department.

Presses: Imperial, Sherwin and Cope, super-royal; Hopkinson proof press.

Type: Assorted.

Function: Teaching bibliography at honours level, plus printing of occasional materials.

12. **University of Melbourne, Baillieu Library.**

At the time of the enquiry the Friends of the Baillieu Library had presented a large Alexandra to the Library and it had been put into working condition. It is hoped that at some future date members of the Library staff and interested students of bibliography would use the press in a workshop or laboratory sense.

13. **University of Canterbury, Department of English.**

At the time of the enquiry no press had been formally established, though there had been plans for some years to introduce a bibliography course and the Department had some equipment. There is a small table model Excelsior press and two Albions, one – a small 1869 model – belonging to Dr R.F. Stowell, who has used it to produce some small pamphlets under the imprint 'The Green Leaf Press South', the name coming from his old private printing business in the U.S.A. The one work of any significance produced is *The Old Fashioned Printer*, by Mark Twain, with a foreword and essay on "The Poor Boy's College" by Dr Stowell.

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Notes

1. 'The Bibliographical press movement', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 1(1965), 1-13.
2. 'Notes on bibliographical evidence for literary students and editors', *Transactions of The Bibliographical Society* 12(1911-1913), 211-318 (p.220).

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