

Book Reviews

Andrew Pettegree. *The Book in the Renaissance.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010. 421p. \$40.00 (ISBN 9780300110098). LC2009-026513. "Printing did not invent the book," Andrew Pettegree reminds his readers at the outset of this highly readable volume. Much of the remaining pages essay a new history of the first hundred and fifty years of printing, a history tantalizingly decoupled from just the books themselves. This is a vision of the history of the book that may only be possible now that global Internet resources are available to historians. Pettegree in his concluding "Note on Sources" notes that the foundations of book history in the writings of Lucien Febvre and Elizabeth Eisenstein had been rooted in the most prominent library collections, which naturally represent the printed works that have been most valued and received the greatest custodial care. *The Book in the Renaissance* is an attempt at reformulating our understanding of the first age of print, based on new tabulations—and guesses—about printed materials that have heretofore escaped scrutiny.

The Book in the Renaissance is an outcome of long work by a team at the University of St. Andrews, synthesizing the wide variety of Web-based data now available with a wealth of more traditional scholarship in book history; it is a herald of the information that will soon be available in the *Universal Short Title Catalogue*. The book aims toward a much wider history of early printed works—not only the humanists' pride in the rediscovered wisdom of the ancients, but also the everyday prayer books, best-seller romances, pamphlets, almanacs, newsletters, broadsheets, indulgences, among others, that provided the income that allowed many printers to keep their business alive. The text carefully navigates a balance between popular history

and scholarly monograph, between educational tool (the opening chapters might easily serve as a course reading) and sociology essay. Its historical narrative contains both chronological and topical elements, illustrated with a great variety of the printed objects described in the text (with emphasis on the author's Reformation specialty).

Pettegree's history keeps the business motivations of all parties—authors, scribes, publishers, booksellers—at the forefront, and this economic focus dominates the beginning of his history. The opening chapters are devoted to a well-crafted introduction to the history of the book before printing, to the invention of various book-printing technologies from woodcuts to movable type, to the spread of those technologies from Germanic lands to stylistic and technical advances in Venice, and further spread to hundreds of European cities. He carefully delineates the factors leading to the success or failure of early printing shops, with special care for how the needs of local markets such as universities and distribution centers played a factor. The text is full of insights such as the unsuspected influence of Gutenberg by his choice of Jerome's Vulgate text for the Bible, and the development of title page design. At the same time, Pettegree's narrative frequently acknowledges the profit possible to a printer of "standard editions."

The second part of the book transitions somewhat uneasily from narrative history to the topical history at its heart. As Venetian printing innovations spread and the Reformation helped create new printing centers such as Wittenberg and Basel, new genres of printed material emerged, genres that have been more ephemeral to traditional histories of printing. Pettegree devotes this section to genres of printed



works less well collected by major libraries: prayer books, newsletters, Papal indulgences (perhaps 30 percent of the surviving printed documents from the fifteenth century), the Reformation's warring pamphlets, best-selling vernacular works (especially chivalric romances), and bread-and-butter Latin grammars and other educational works. In all cases, Pettegree is able to back up his narrative with concrete data from a variety of sources, often including counts of specific print runs to demonstrate the relative profitability of a particular printed edition.

The third and fourth sections of *The Book in the Renaissance* evolve into even more interesting and even more esoteric subjects; in these chapters, the history of print is a lens and data point through which to view several different areas of more general social history. Printed books are examined as a point of political and religious conflict (via incidents of book burnings and mass censorship), as a philosophical grounding point in strife-torn France, as a benchmark for economic distribution in the midst of confessional wars, and as participants in the sixteenth-century development of technical scientific illustration and medical practice. Finally, he offers a chapter ruminating on the effects of widespread printing on the Renaissance concept of the library itself: the collections that had once been the province (and the pride) of great lords became possible for average scholarship, and the erudite discourse once relegated to the libraries of the nobility were now possible in the stationer's shop.

Pettegree admits, however, that even this more boisterous history of early European printing may still be incomplete. Plantin kept a single copy of everything he printed, no matter how ephemeral; for how many other presses are the complete riches of history lost? Booksellers' inventories can be quite revealing, but if they represent *unsold* inventory, do we gain a complete picture? Pettegree closes his history with two counterexamples to his own approach. After noting the too-

numerous examples of book destruction in the course of warfare (up to World War II and the Gulf wars), he notes an instance in 1989 in which Dutch workmen discovered a group of Protestant books apparently hidden more than four hundred years prior in a house in Delft; fully four of the six books had no other known exemplars anywhere in the world. In a different example, the prolific scrapbooks of the sixteenth-century diarist Pierre de L'Estoile apparently preserve vestiges of a variety of "street" sources, many of them apparently printed broadsheets and newsletters currently lost to our knowledge.

In his conclusion, Pettegree brings to a crux both the potentially paradigm shift of his approach and its inherent limitation. It is certainly true that the history of the book as traditionally written has been centered on the printed books of highest value, the volumes most assiduously sought after and carefully preserved by nobles, scholars, collectors, and (later) librarians. It is completely appropriate to broaden that history to include the gamut of other works that could fill the corners in a printer's schedule and the gaps in his bottom line. Pettegree's *The Book in the Renaissance* uses a variety of electronic and more traditional sources to do so. Even so, as with any historical narrative, the author must admit that there are parts of this history that still await excavation. — Timothy J. Dickey, *Independent Scholar, Columbus, Ohio.*

Envisioning Future Academic Library Services: Initiatives, Ideas and Challenges. Ed. Sue McKnight. London: Facet Publishing, 2010. 247p. (ISBN 9781856046916). LC2010-478131.

Library shelves and book catalogues are filled with volumes prophesying the end of the library world as we know it, with change so imminent and so pervasive that it hardly seems possible for any paper-based book to reach readers before it becomes obsolete. While the coming of, and need for, change is certainly trumpeted in