

Printing Press DBQ

Document A: Description of Book Making before the Printing Press

During the Middle Ages, manuscript books were produced by monks who worked with pen and ink in a copying room known as a scriptorium. Even a small book could take months to complete, and a book the size of the Bible could take several years.

www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/gutenberg/2a.html

1. How were books produced before the printing press?
2. How reliable were the books? Why or Why not?

Document B: Description of the importance of Gutenberg's Printing Press

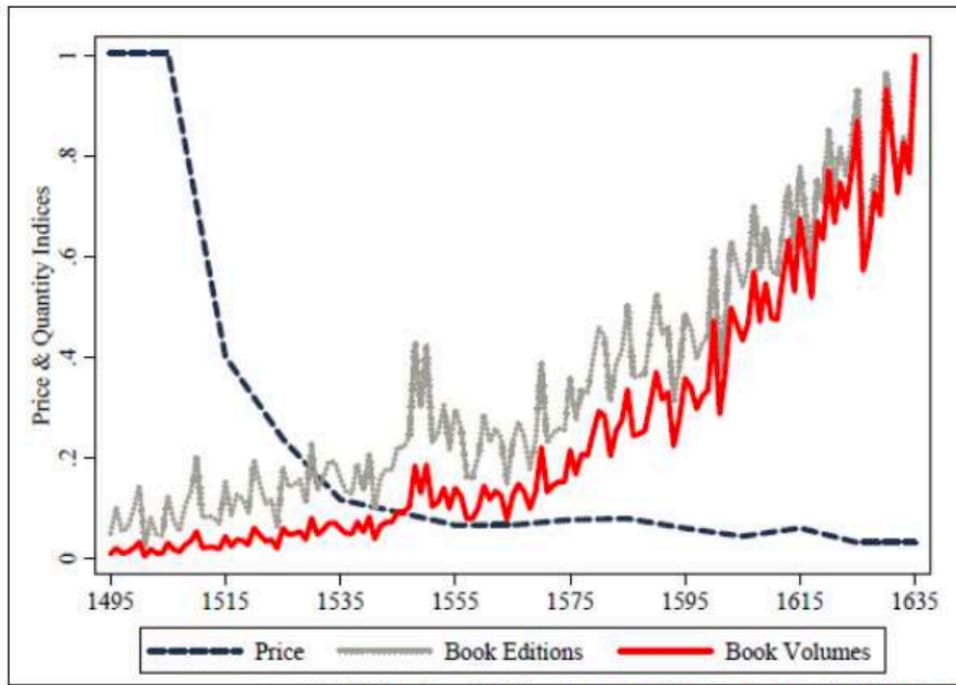
Gutenberg's methods spread with stunning rapidity. By 1500 an estimated half million printed books were in circulation: religious works, Greek and Roman classics, scientific texts, Columbus' report from the New World. An acceleration of the Renaissance was only the first by-product of the Gutenberg press. Without it, the Protestant movement might have been failed, as well as the subsequent political and industrial revolutions.

Text – Robert Friedman, ed. *The Life Millennium: The 100 Most Important Events and People of the Past 1,000 Years*

3. Which major movements were accelerated by the printing press?
4. Why do you think the printing press helped these movements succeed?

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Document E: Prices and Quantities of Printed Books in England 1495-1639



The Welfare Impact of a New Good: The Printed Book Jeremiah Dittmar 2011

5. According to the graph the price of books decreased, what increased?
6. What else would increase as the price of books declined? Why?

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Document D: The Printing Press and its Effects on Book Production – Revolution or Evolution?

The most important consequence of Gutenberg's invention, was the spread of printed books in medieval and early modern Europe. Classical, religious, and scientific literature was printed in the vernacular [everyday language] and spread across Europe, increasing the level of literacy by providing readable texts to a growing reading public. These printed texts were sources of information for people of all political, social and economic strata [groups].

More and more, print became associated with the freedom of speech, religion, learning, and the fight against old superstition. One consequence of the printing press is that it allowed for the quick reproduction and widespread dissemination of religious and classical texts and ideas across Europe. By making book-production increasingly cheaper, the printed word read far and wide to laymen across Europe, creating a larger reading public. Would literature of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution have been spread as far and wide without the duplicative powers of print? Probably not. Similarly, would these movements have been as significant without their large audience? No.

The Printing Press and its Effects on Book Production – Revolution or Evolution by Eirik Jakobsen May 2005 University of Stavanger, Faculty of Arts and Education

7. Why did the use of the vernacular in the newly printed books help to reach all levels and types of people?

8. Is the author showing any sort of bias (preference for only one side of the argument)? Explain

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Johannes Gutenberg

With the invention of the personal computer and the Internet, a new age in communications began. Now people could communicate faster and more easily than ever before. Writing, editing, and storing information became quick and easy. It was no longer necessary to write draft after draft when changes could be made so easily using a word processor program. Messages could now be sent in no time to anywhere in the world, without addressing envelopes or paying for stamps.

Centuries earlier, around the year 1450, a similar revolution in communications had occurred in Germany. This happened when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. Gutenberg was not the first person to use printing to copy a piece of writing. Printing had already been invented in China, where they used clay to print Chinese characters. Small items, such as posters and flyers, were already being printed in Europe too, using the woodblock method of printing. Books and other larger works, however, were still being copied by hand. At this time, books were usually produced only in Latin, and only the most educated people read them. Gutenberg's printing press changed all of this.

Gutenberg's printing press used type made of metal. Each letter or punctuation mark was cast separately. This meant that the type could be rearranged over and over again to print many different items. This improvement to the printing process was called moveable type.

With Gutenberg's method, the letters were set by hand into a wooden frame, or printing block. Then ink was rolled over the whole block. Next, a heavy press pushed the printing block down onto a sheet of paper. The printing block could be used over and over again to print many copies, and then the type could be rearranged to set the next page.

Gutenberg printed calendars, grammar books, and all types of useful publications, but his really extraordinary project was the Gutenberg Bible. Nothing like it had ever been printed before.

The Gutenberg Bible was a two-volume book that was 1,282 pages long. Even with the printing press, it was a huge undertaking. Gutenberg couldn't do it by himself. He had to recruit workers and find wealthy patrons to sponsor the project. When the printing was done, around 1454, they had 180 copies of the Bible, 150 printed on paper and 30 printed on parchment. Artists added the colorful, or "illuminated," letters to each copy by hand. Forty-eight copies of Gutenberg's Bible still exist today, including two in the Gutenberg Museum. They are considered treasures, not only because they were the latest in technology in their time, but also because they are beautiful books.

Gutenberg's printing press brought about a revolution in communications, much like the computer did much more recently. Once books could be mass-produced, they began to be printed in the languages that people spoke every day, not just in Latin. More and more people began to read and write. In fact, Gutenberg's printing press was one of the inventions that led up to the great changes beginning to happen in Europe in the late Middle Ages. Changes in the way people lived and worked, including the Renaissance of art and literature and the Industrial Revolution, all had roots in the new communication technology that Gutenberg began with his printing press.

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1. Gutenberg's printing press was invented before _____.
 - A. wood block printing
 - B. clay printing
 - C. the computer
 - D. none of the above
2. Gutenberg's invention was a milestone in the field of _____.
 - A. metal work
 - B. transportation
 - C. art
 - D. communications
3. Gutenberg printed _____ copies of his bible.
 - A. 180
 - B. 1450
 - C. 30
 - D. 48
4. Gutenberg's invention encouraged people to _____.
 - A. read
 - B. work
 - C. travel
 - D. cook
5. "Moveable type" meant type that could _____.
 - A. print more than one copy
 - B. be rearranged
 - C. be lifted easily
 - D. change shape
6. This article compares Gutenberg's invention to the invention of the _____.
 - A. automobile
 - B. pyramids
 - C. computer
 - D. assembly line
7. Latin was the language used by scholars _____.
 - A. in England only
 - B. in Germany only
 - C. after the invention of the printing press
 - D. up until the time of the printing press
8. Gutenberg's invention changed the course of history. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.