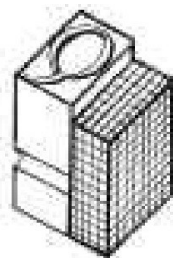


Quadrat



*A periodical bulletin of research in progress
on the history of the British book trade*

Issue 17

Autumn 2003

A SPECIAL ISSUE reporting on the progress of the
British Book Trade Index on the Web

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The British Book Trade Index on the Web

www.bbti.bham.ac.uk

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A Note from the New Editor

I HAVE REALISED, through working on the British Book Trade Index project, through membership of the British Book Trade History Conference Committee, through helping to edit the recent volumes in the 'Print Networks' series and, now, through taking on the editorship of *Quadrat*, that Peter Isaac is no easy act to follow! That should not have surprised me (and on one level it didn't) because I had seen this amazing man's energy and enthusiasm at first hand. I shall always remember Peter, at one of our early meetings about BBTI moving to Birmingham, commenting ruefully that he could no longer work a 12-hour day comfortably; he was already an octogenarian!

We decided that it would be sensible, for many reasons, to make this first 'Brummie' *Quadrat* a special issue devoted primarily to the success story of BBTI's move to Birmingham and onto the Web. Also new to this issue is the inclusion of material relevant to the Book History Postgraduate Network, which we are now co-ordinating at Birmingham but which is, quite rightly, beginning to find a life – and a voice – of its own.

One practical reason for focusing on BBTI is that there was virtually no other material available. If *Quadrat* is to continue to be not only the newsletter of the BBTI project but also a more broadly-based 'bulletin of research in progress on the history of the British book trade' – and I sincerely hope it can, and will – we shall need readers to offer articles, reviews, 'notes and queries' items and reports (however tentative) on research planned or in progress. So, PLEASE, do let me have your contributions for the next issue **by the end of January 2004**.

Finally, apologies for the tiny print in issue no. 16. We are not sure what went wrong but we have had a small number of copies printed at the correct size. If you are having problems reading the small typeface, please ask me for a larger-print copy of issue 16.

John Hinks

E-mail: J.Hinks@bham.ac.uk

THE BRITISH BOOK TRADE INDEX ON THE WEB

Maureen Bell

Project Director

IN THIS ISSUE of *Quadrat* we celebrate Professor Peter Isaac's legacy to book trade history in one particular respect: the continuing development of the British Book Trade Index on the Web. BBTI is, of course, only one aspect of the work of an extraordinarily energetic man, and a full account of his career and publications would highlight his work on William Bulmer and William Davison, the History of the Book Trade in the North, the annual British Book Trade History Conference, his Presidency of the Bibliographical Society, *Quadrat* itself and much more.¹

Peter's ambitious scheme of an index which would represent all those working in the book trades and related occupations began in the mid-1980s and, with characteristic vigour, Peter quickly gathered around him a group of willing contributors and himself designed the database into which incoming records would be entered. A growing army of contributors began working through the standard printed sources of biographical information before, in some cases, turning to primary sources located in record offices in towns and cities across the country. As the records flowed in the large scale of the enterprise became apparent, yet Peter remained undaunted by the unremitting task of entering and editing data which fell on him alone. The University of Newcastle provided him with space and with valuable technical support; and small grants – initially from the Sir James Knott Charitable Trust and later from the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust – enabled Peter to secure, short-term, some assistance.

Those of us who were contributing records or using the database for our own research were mostly unaware of how large a task the upkeep of BBTI was becoming. By the mid-1990s it was clear that the sheer

¹ See 'Peter Isaac 1921-2002' by Barry McKay, *The Library* 7th series, 4(2) June 2003, pp.171-4.

volume of data submitted by enthusiastic contributors was beginning to outrun Peter's capacity to process it, and the need for clerical and editorial assistance as well as a permanent and secure home for the Index was weighing on Peter's mind as he approached his eightieth year. Peter initially approached me for advice about sources of funding; several meetings later, and with valuable advice from Richard Biddiscombe of the University of Birmingham's Information Services, the process of making applications began.

I have no doubt that Peter would have greatly preferred the Index to stay in its Newcastle home but, once that was ruled out, a move to Birmingham with a clear commitment for its long-term maintenance from the University was clearly preferable to continued uncertainty. In 2001 our second application to the Arts and Humanities Research Board was successful and a grant to support the input and editing of data and the conversion of the Index into a Web resource was obtained. Peter was able to oversee the move personally and in advance of the project's starting in April 2002 he visited Birmingham on several occasions, working through many box files with us to ensure that John and I were clear about his own priorities for data entry. He was looking forward to chairing the first meeting of the Project's Management Group; in the event, his funeral took place the day before that meeting, and we were very grateful to Professor John Feather for stepping in to chair the group at very short notice.

We are now approaching the halfway point in the three-year grant and while progress in converting the database into Web form has been swift there is a great deal of work yet to be done. Mike Parry, our Web Development Officer, working with John Hinks as Research Fellow, has converted the data, built the website and developed the search mechanisms which went 'live' to the public last Autumn. He is now working on the routines which will enable us to offer to contributors the possibility of submitting new data or amending existing records online. John, a long-time user of and contributor to BBTI in its old CD-ROM format, has taken the lead in making editorial decisions and in devising research questions to test the coverage of the database in order to prioritise records for input. Betty Hagglund, the latest recruit to the team, is now beginning to tackle the backlog of data entry and in the

process is, with John, testing the quality of some of the existing data. This special issue of *Quadrat* gives each of them the opportunity to give readers a flavour of their work in progress.

So what do I, as Director of the project, do? As the award holder I am of course responsible for the management of the project and am accountable to AHRB for the work undertaken and the budget. Establishing the office (begging and borrowing desks, chairs and other furniture, negotiating with locksmiths) required more time, charm and guile than I had anticipated. Some of what I do is paperwork: preparing reports for the AHRB and for our own Project Management Group means bursts of activity at particular points of the year. As a matter of routine we meet as a team regularly to review progress, set targets, share problems and discuss possible solutions together. Establishing and maintaining contacts with other interested parties and projects both in the UK and abroad, is vital; and taking opportunities to publicize and demonstrate the database, talking to Bibliographical Societies and speaking at conferences is shared with John. Establishing a comprehensive list of sources so far used and compiling a list of contributors (both now available on the website) have been difficult to do without Peter's comprehensive knowledge of BBTI and its history, and I would be particularly grateful to know of any names of contributors I have missed. Thinking ahead to possible developments of the BBTI data – investigating, for example, the practicality of generating maps for specific trades at specific dates – is a current concern, and may lead to further applications for funding.

The more we work on the Index, the more we are aware of the gaps and anomalies which so frustrated Peter: some towns and regions have been very thoroughly researched by individual contributors, though sometimes for particular periods only, while other towns are currently poorly represented. It is not within the terms of our current funding that we should research and fill these gaps but, at the very least, by the end of the project in 2005, we shall make available on the website a list of areas/towns still needing to be researched, in the hope that interested contributors will take them up. BBTI in its present form is the result of the long-term and generous collaboration of many enthusiasts and it will, we hope, continue to grow in the same spirit of collaboration. Its

development as a Web resource means that we shall for the future avoid the build-up of paper forms and typing which Peter, as lone editor and typist, had to deal with. By the Autumn of this year contributors will be able to submit their new records and amendments electronically, to be received, checked and incorporated into the database as efficiently and quickly as possible. Establishing BBTI for the future as a publicly accessible and dynamic research resource will be the best tribute to Peter's vision of BBTI that we can offer.

THE BBTI PROJECT MANAGEMENT GROUP currently comprises the following people. Welcome to Moira Goff who has recently replaced Mike Crump as the British Library's representative. The Group is chaired by Professor John Feather.

Dr Maureen Bell, *Project Director*

Richard Biddiscombe, *Information Services, University of Birmingham*

Prof John Feather, *Dept. of Information Science, Loughborough University*

Dr Moira Goff, *British Library*

Dr Brian Hillyard, *National Library of Scotland*

Dr John Hinks, *BBTI Research Fellow*

Ian Maxted, *Exeter Central Library*

Dr Mike Parry, *BBTI Web Development Officer*

David Pearson, *Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine*

Dr David Stoker, *Dept. of Library and Information Studies, Aberystwyth*

EVALUATING BBTI ON THE WEB ***A STUDY OF URBAN BOOK-TRADE ACTIVITY***

John Hinks
Research Fellow

THE PROJECT FUNDING for the BBTI project includes provision for several small-scale research projects with the aim of evaluating BBTI on the Web as a research tool. Research is one of the two major activities of my post of Research Fellow, the other being editing (quality control) of the content of the website. The research element of the project has the primary aim of testing the comprehensiveness, quality and usability of the Web-based BBTI.

One of the first priorities is to identify any major gaps – geographical, chronological or other – in the coverage of BBTI data. Given that my post is a half-time post for three years (already almost half over!) and that research is only one of my two main activities, the amount of time available for research is not large.² However, research time is being maximised by means of support from my colleague Mike Parry, the project's Web Development Officer; Mike's research support, especially in the areas of data management and mathematical analysis, is a great help. Fortunately for the project, Mike's experience and skills as a scientist (with a PhD in physics) and mine (qualifications in library studies and long experience as a librarian; plus an MA and PhD in historical subjects) are complementary. We usually sum up the situation as 'he does the numbers and I do the words' – something of an oversimplification but not too wide of the mark!

The first research project – ***Urban Book-Trade Activity: a survey of BBTI evidence*** – is nearing completion, priority for the first year of the three-year project having been given to designing and launching the Web-site and to 'cleaning-up' the inherited data, rather

² This is entirely appropriate as the main thrust of the AHRB programme funding our project is 'resource enhancement'. The research element is intended to support and complement the resource enhancement process, in this case the development of BBTI as a Web-based resource, rather than as an end in itself.

than to research. The aim of this study is to identify the scale, according to the evidence of BBTI, of book-trade activity in selected larger English towns. Comparative ‘snapshots’ are being created, at various points in time, to show the apparent scale of book-trade activity in selected towns. Follow-up research might be needed to identify reasons for major differences. The first phase was to identify the largest towns at certain periods and to make a selection of towns suitable for a comparison over a long period. The final selection includes older-established corporate towns as well as expanding industrial towns. Identifying the largest towns at certain periods was surprisingly difficult because published pre-Census population estimates vary enormously.

Once the selection of towns was settled, BBTI was systematically searched for evidence of bookseller/stationer activity and printing activity.³ The results of this study are currently being analysed and arranged in various tabular and graphical forms, which should enable some conclusions to be drawn about the relative scale of book-trade activity in comparable towns. Differences will be further examined to try to establish whether they are historically ‘real’ or whether they reveal a gap in BBTI coverage – a crucial distinction.

Although the main aim of the study of selected major towns is to disclose geographical shortcomings in BBTI data, it may also reveal unevenness in chronological coverage and/or in the records of different trades. In addition to providing some useful data on the apparent (*i.e.* as recorded in BBTI) scale of book-trade activity, the results should provide valuable management information on the current state of BBTI’s completeness, a useful ‘spin-off’ of this piece of research. A further phase of this study will focus on the printing trade and its spread into provincial England following the lapse of the Printing (Licensing) Act, by examining printing activity during the twenty years after 1695.

³ Care was taken to exclude double counting which might arise from cross-referencing, duplicate records or multiple trades. Because of the way the database was designed, BBTI should be used for quantitative research only with great caution.

Later this year, when the Urban Book-Trade Activity study has been completed, a start will be made on the second BBTI research project, on book-trade networks in the Midlands. This project will examine regional trade connections in the Midlands, to examine the activities of traders with several outlets in the region and to attempt an assessment of Birmingham's importance as a regional centre of book-trade activity. This continues the comparative theme, building on the experience gained in the first project, perhaps enabling more sophisticated comparisons to be attempted between both geographical areas and individual practitioners.

The dissemination of the results of BBTI research in the form of conference papers and/or published articles forms a useful scholarly exercise in itself but also has the benefit of publicizing BBTI as a research resource. There will be more information on BBTI research in the next issue of *Quadrat*. In the meantime, we shall post some information on the web-site (when we have some firm results) and I shall attempt to answer any questions that readers of *Quadrat* may wish to ask.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The 2004 British Book Trade History Conference will take place at the **University of Edinburgh, 27th to 29th July**. The **Call for Papers** and a note on the **Conference Fellowship** are in this issue of *Quadrat*. The Committee is pleased to welcome Bill Bell on board as the 2004 conference organizer. With Bill's enthusiasm and the support of his team at Edinburgh, we can be sure of a successful conference!

MAKING IT WORK: the technical side of the BBTI project

Mike Parry

Web Development Officer

SINCE APRIL 2002 I have been the Web Development Officer for the BBTI project. In this role I am responsible for all the technical aspects of the project, from managing and enhancing the BBTI database, through to developing the web pages that allow users to search and add data to the index. When I joined the BBTI team I inherited a rather large and ungainly dBase IV database containing some 79,000 records. Whilst the quality and scale of Professor Peter Isaac's database was very impressive, significant technological advances since BBTI began meant that it was in serious need of modernisation.

There were three main problems with the original database:

Firstly dBase IV was not powerful enough to cope with large field sizes, resulting in much of the information in the index being either encoded or abbreviated using a set of 'standard' abbreviations. This made the data difficult to read and also very easy to misinterpret. For example, a record's notes containing the text 'Fath John Smith' could quite easily be interpreted as 'Father's name was John Smith' rather than its actual meaning of 'was the father of John Smith'. There were similar problems with the trade information. The unusually high number of Antiquarian Stationers (encoded as 'STA') turned out to be Stamp Agents/Stamp Offices (encoded as 'sta'). This highlights the ease with which data entry errors can significantly alter the meaning of the data when codes and abbreviations are used.

The second major problem was how the book trades, non-book trades and notes fields were used. As a consequence of the limited field size, BBTI policy was that if the book trade information did not fit into the book trade fields, then the information could overflow into the non-book trade field and even into the notes. Similarly the

non-book trade information could overflow into the notes. So in order to make a 'complete' search for a specific book trade, a user would have to search five separate fields for a specific trade code! However the biggest problem of all for BBTI was that it was not easily accessible to everybody and many users would almost certainly not be using the most current version of the database.

So what has been done to resolve these problems? Firstly the whole database has been transferred into Microsoft Access, which can easily cope with large field sizes, allowing up to seven pages of text for the notes field. It also allows the database to be completely restructured into what is known as a 'relational database'. In non-technical terms such a structure allows each record to have an unlimited number of book trades, non-book trades and sources, all of which are kept separate in their own distinct tables. This system greatly reduces the time needed to perform trade information searches and eliminates any confusion between book and non-book trades.

A diagram of the new database structure can be seen in figure 1 on page 13. A lot of work has been done on transferring BBTI data to the new database structure. All the book and non-book trade information has been separated and normalised, and many of the abbreviations used in the notes field have been replaced (although this massive editing task is ongoing).

The next stage of the project has been to develop the BBTI web pages to allow the general public to have full, free access to the database. Several pages have been created that contain general background information about the project and the origins of BBTI for people who are new to BBTI. There is also a page with links to other book history sites that visitors to our site may find of interest.

The most important section of the site is the search area, which has been 'live' since 16th December 2002 and has received over 1,400 visits. A search page has been designed that enables users to search by surname, forename, earliest and latest trading dates, earliest and latest biographical dates, country, county, town, book trade and secondary book trade (or trade descriptor), and the option of

excluding all London records. Users can combine as many or as few of these search parameters as they wish to produce a focused and relevant list of matching records. The name fields also have the opportunity of 'inexact' searching where the entered text forms the beginning of the search string, ideal for finding those variant spellings! The web-based search page is hopefully much more user-friendly and powerful than the original dBase version but if anybody has any suggestions for improvements please feel free to contact us.

Finally to the future of BBTI... since moving to Birmingham the number of records in the database has been increased by some 20% to approximately 94,000 records. Work is almost complete on the data entry section of the website that will allow users to submit new records to BBTI by filling in online forms. The submitted data will be edited by a member of the Birmingham team before being fully added to the database so as to maintain the high quality of BBTI data. In addition it will be possible for amendments to existing records to be made online, again subject to editing. So when the project comes to an end, BBTI will be able to continue to grow and expand, with the minimum of supervision, ensuring that the future of this valuable research source is secure.

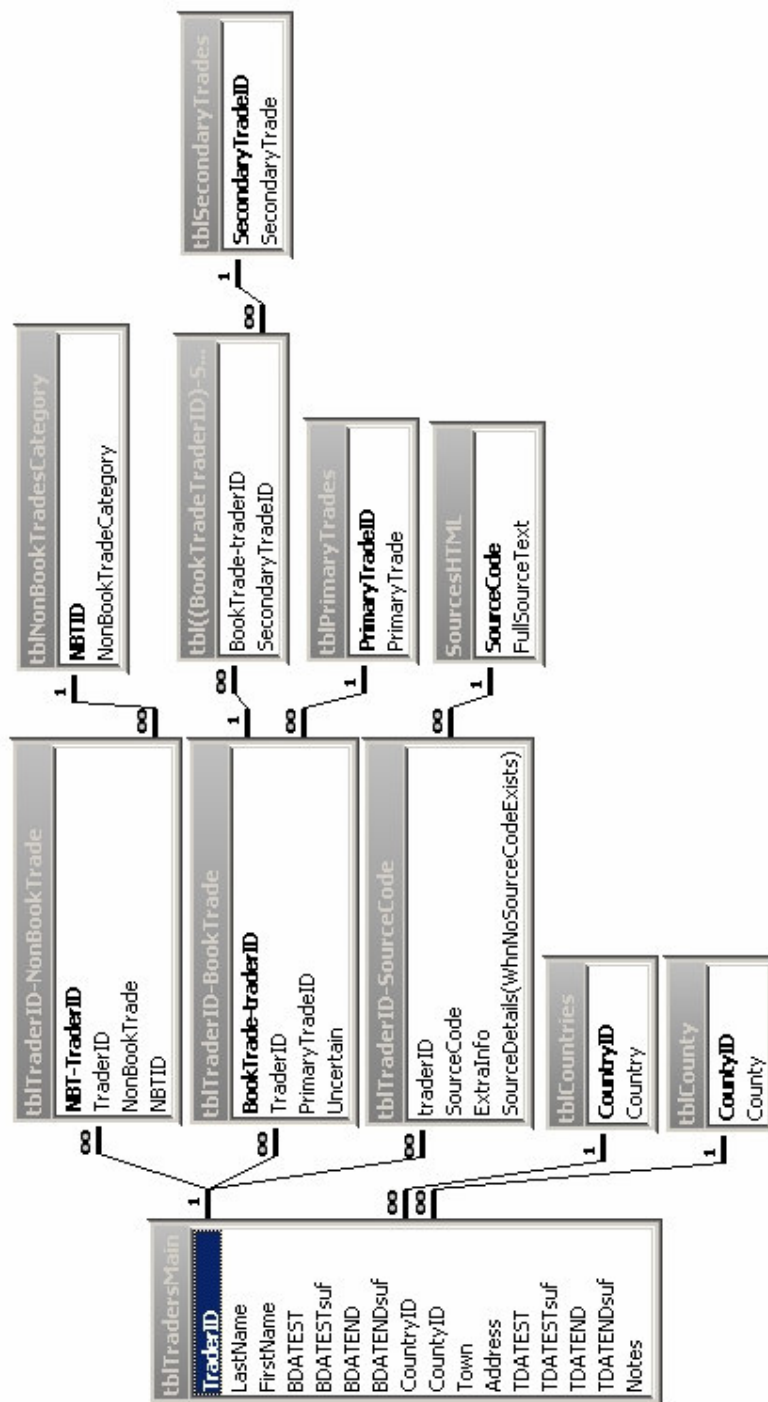


Figure 1. The new structure of the BBTI MS Access database.

‘WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?’

We invited a few regular users of BBTI to give us their comments on the new website:

AT A TIME WHEN Research Assessors are still to be persuaded about the value of such projects, the availability of BBTI on-line is to be heartily welcomed. Birmingham University and the AHRB are to be congratulated for their decision to support such a worthwhile resource. From a user's point of view it appears visually friendly and delivers its background information economically and in plain English. Even the most technophobic of bibliographers will soon find themselves at home with the straightforward search function. It is apparent that BBTI is still a work-in-progress and a brief look at entries for the early nineteenth century reveals that there is still much fundamental work to be done. While it is remarkably good on its inclusion of the more obscure characters in the book trade, an initial search of major figures from the DNB throws up a number of surprising lacunae. George Smith, the great nineteenth-century publisher is not at all to be found; Charles Edward Mudie, the Leviathan of New Oxford Street, makes only a brief ambiguous appearance, as a librarian in 1822; and so on. Such anomalies will no doubt be remedied with the imminent appearance of the New DNB, which will be scrupulously trawled when it appears.

While BBTI might be regarded as a collective endeavour in the true sense of the term – a fact to which the remarkable list of sources testifies – the level of detail that one encounters in the Index today is largely owed to Peter Isaac's rapacious appetite for the most minute detail relating to the history of the British book trade. If this scholar's experience is anything to go by, its originator must have spent as much time generously answering questions as posing them. Let us hope that its ready availability on-line, thanks to the efforts of Bell, Hinks, Parry, and Hagglund, means that its future as an indispensable resource for historians and bibliographers is now secure.

Bill Bell

Centre for the History of the Book, University of Edinburgh

IT TOOK MUCH LONGER than anticipated to explore the BBTI site. Nothing to do with problems (or gormlessness on my part, I hope), everything to do with its thoroughness. We've all suffered from encounters with internet rubbish which leave us dissatisfied with content, irritated with non-working links and generally murderous about waste of time. Well, this is not one of those. The content shows all the hallmarks of a very carefully thought-out site, and is presented in a clear and unfussy style. Even at this stage its breadth is admirable. I particularly liked the 'placing' of the Index in the context of book history research and found Links especially useful. When I started some ten years ago others' references to research groups and publications were confusing, especially as they seemed to involve many of the same people.

The only slight queries about content are (a) the word 'obvious' on the opening line of *Why Birmingham?* and (b) the use of the defining terms 'before 1852' and 'by 1851'. Would it be better to stick to one of those? On editorial design I found the Site Index had a rather crowded look to it; and the titles of papers and articles on the *Dissemination Activity* page would be better on the eye if distinguished from the rest of the text.

The design of the site itself enables quick and easy movement and is, thankfully, gimmick-free. I can do without animated books or animated booksellers (though the latter could be fun). I did however fail to open the *List of Abbreviations in the Notes Field*. Perhaps Sunday was its day of rest. When I moved on to test the Search facility I was disappointed to find none of the information on three booksellers I'd sent in five, four and three years ago. Tiny specks, of course, in the massive backlog. But it prompted me to wonder if some sort of time schedule would be possible for the asterisked items identified as future development, and for the clearing of the 80,000. (I think I can hear groaning.)

Margaret Cooper
Bromsgrove

THE HOME PAGE is clear, with adequate information explaining what BBTI is and how it relates to other electronic and printed sources. The navigational buttons in the text are useful and the additional links on the left-hand side are welcome. The University of Birmingham frame is fine as an institutional header, although the disadvantage of this is that it gives the page a less than independent feel. A non-site specific URL would also help the index to stand alone, but this is not essential as search engines locate the URL through the British Book Trade Index without reference to the University of Birmingham.

The compulsory search tips are useful but it is slightly frustrating to be forced to go past these before continuing to the search page. However, the information is necessary for the user to get the most out of the search. The option not to see the page again is helpful.

The search screen offers more help options, so support is always close at hand. The drop-down menus prevent time wasted in trying to match vocabulary, and aid the searcher. The date feature is one of the best features of this site, as so often enquiries start with a name and a date or a trade and a date or date range, and little other firm information.

The display of results is clear and user-friendly, and gave me as much information as I needed to continue my research.

My overall impression of the British Book Trade Index is positive. A lot of thought has been given to the presentation and content of the screens, and the content of the resource is of great value to book trade historians. Perhaps other book trade records, such as those held by the Stationers' Company, could be collated into this or a similar resource in the future.

Sarah Mahurter
Librarian, London College of Printing

WHENEVER I MENTIONED the words 'British Book Trade Index' to Peter Isaac, a frown or two usually furrowed his brow. This was not meant to indicate dissatisfaction at his great project, but rather frustration at the slow pace of converting thousands of accumulated snippets of information into a consultable format. I had passed on to him the fruits of my own labours into listing circulating and subscription libraries and book clubs many years ago. Their absorption into his main files was a long time in coming but, thanks to Alan Longbottom of Leeds, progress was made. With the wonders of the World-Wide Web, the perfect home for Peter's material as a database has arrived. I had also given my material to Robin Alston for his on-line 'List of libraries', but the latter is essentially a text rather than a database and so has to be approached differently. From my point of view, having my own material in two different formats, and amalgamated with much more besides, is to me a considerable boon.

These are still early days, but a look at BBTI records which have already been mounted for libraries and book clubs has shown me new leads and fresh discoveries. Of course, it has also invoked utter despair that I will ever finish collecting references to such libraries, but how many bibliographers really want to finish their researches? No, really? As the BBTI database grows, it will have to be used with caution. Duplicate entries will provide confusing information. But this should not be a deterrent. The BBTI is already proving a useful tool. Whether it will ever be possible to look up references in the BBTI as fast as one can use Plomer's dictionaries of the book trade is another matter, but at least the information will be up-to-date and others will be encouraged to submit their own additions and amendments. Of course, if everything we want to know about the book trade appears on the Internet, what shall we have to do in our retirement?

K.A. Manley
Institute of Historical Research,
University of London

WHILST SCOTLAND has its own book trade index*, hosted by the National Library of Scotland, information on those involved in the Welsh book trade is contained within the British Book Trade Index. The database itself is well-presented and easy to use with the additional benefit that users can limit the search to both Wales and the individual Welsh counties. A potential problem is the listing of Welsh place names as only one variant of each place name appears, for example, Dolgellau was often spelt as Dolgelly in the nineteenth century, and Caernarfon (or Caernarvon) as Carnarvon, and this could potentially cause problems for those unfamiliar with Welsh place names and their changing spellings. A quick search of the BBTI records for Wales reveals that the majority of Welsh records were taken from Eiluned Rees' seminal work on the Welsh book trade, *Libri Walliae* (which is, confusingly listed under ER and not REES in the list of sources). However, Charles Parry's 2001 supplement to this work is not included in the list of sources. Scholars of the Welsh book trade need to send their data to the BBTI to expand the Welsh section and make it more than a computerised version of *Libri Walliae*.

Lisa Peters
University College, Chester

***www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/index.html**

WE HAVE USED BBTI at Chetham's for many years, initially as a contributor of records of Manchester book-trade figures, and more recently as a consumer, searching the database for information which can assist our cataloguing work. For the last few years we have been concerned to create machine-readable records of our holdings of early printed books and as part of this work we have attempted, where possible, to provide added entries for printers and booksellers and for the place of publication. This has been done in the simple belief that these days a researcher may be every bit as interested in finding out which books we hold that were printed in a given town or by a given printer as those written by a particular author. For that reason the BBTI in its various incarnations has always been an important resource, as a place to which we can go whenever we need

to amplify the often sketchy imprint information from the title-page; to find out for example, which 'John Smith of London' actually printed the book in front of us.

The usefulness of BBTI is, however, dependent on its interface. Cataloguing has to be done quickly and we have neither the time nor the resources to spend hours working on individual volumes. BBTI in its original steam-driven DOS format was a place of last resort, something that had to be searched when all other possibilities had failed. We put up with the duplication of records, with the fact that some search options never seemed to work, and with the fact that the programme invariably crashed for no apparent reason. However, BBTI did contain information that would be not be found elsewhere even though getting that information out of the database often proved to be something of a nightmare.

The transfer of the project to Birmingham and the consequent development of the web-based interface has turned the BBTI from a resource to which one turned reluctantly as a place of last resort into a site of first importance, as one of the main resources of research information concerning book-trade history. Our cataloguers now search the database on a daily basis in the knowledge that it works and that it works quickly and well. The current project is a credit to all who work on it and to the AHRB for funding it; indeed it is difficult to imagine a project that better illustrates the notion of 'resource enhancement' that is central to the work of the AHRB. We look forward to the project's future enhancements and development.

Michael Powell
Chetham's Library
Manchester

Many thanks to those who contributed the above notes – and thank you to many other people who have provided feedback and helpful suggestions on the BBTI Web-site. Several improvements to the site have been made as a result of users' comments. Please feel free to use the on-line comments form or e-mail me at J.Hinks@bham.ac.uk

UPDATE: BOOK TRADE HISTORY CONFERENCE & *PRINT NETWORKS*

AS SOME READERS WILL KNOW, we have had a few problems with our conference schedule – the planned conference at Reading this July having been cancelled – and also with our publishing programme. I think that none of us had realised until quite recently exactly how large a workload Peter Isaac carried personally, so we considerably underestimated the person/hours needed to emulate his output! However, the workload of organizing the annual conferences and editing the *Print Networks* series has now been re-allocated, as a result of decisions made at a recent meeting of the Committee.

The state of play with the *Print Networks* publishing programme is that the Festschrift for Peter (*i.e.* the papers from the Worcester conference) should be published in November 2003. The Exeter volume is now scheduled for publication in Spring 2004. The Committee apologises for the delay. Contributors to both volumes have been contacted personally.

BRITISH BOOK TRADE HISTORY CONFERENCE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH 27-29 JULY 2004

The Centre for the History of the Book, at the University of Edinburgh, is pleased to be hosting the twenty-first annual British Book Trade History Conference, which will take place in Edinburgh University Library.

The three-day event will include a visit to Robert Smail's Printing Works, an historic property run under the auspices of the National Trust, dinner in the 17th-century Great Hall of George Heriot's School, and an exhibition on the 18th-century Scottish book trade.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited on any aspect of the production and distribution of print in Great Britain or on aspects of book-trade relations with any part of the former colonies and dominions. Further information will shortly be available at www.arts.ed.ac.uk/chb/

Please submit an abstract of the proposed paper and a brief CV – no more than one side of A4 in total. Alternatively, they can be sent to: Dr John Hinks, Department of English, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT. E-mail: J.Hinks@bham.ac.uk

The deadline for submissions is 30th November 2003. Those whose papers had been accepted for the cancelled Reading Conference should have received a personal e-mail recently.

The conference programme will be determined by the Conference Committee: Dr Iain Beavan (chair), Dr Maureen Bell, Dr John Hinks, Barry McKay, Dr Bill Bell and Ian Maxted. Those offering papers will be informed of the Committee's decision by mid-December.

CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP

The British Book Trade History Conference offers an annual Conference Fellowship for a postgraduate student whose research falls within the parameters of the conference and who wishes to present a paper. The fellowship covers the cost of attending the conference and possibly some assistance towards costs of travel. A detailed submission of the research being undertaken accompanied by a letter of recommendation from a tutor or supervisor should be sent to John Hinks (address above) **by 30th November 2003.**

The papers presented will be published in July 2005 as part of the *Print Networks* series, published jointly by Oak Knoll Press (USA) and the British Library. Papers offered to the conference must be original work and may not be delivered elsewhere before presentation at this conference. It is part of our agreement with the publishers that papers will not be published in any similar collection within one year of their appearance in the appropriate *Print Networks* volume.

Book History Postgraduate Network

Beginning with this issue, *Quadrat* will contain some items of particular interest to members of the Book History Postgraduate Network. **Please note: in order to keep costs down, members of the Network will have access to the on-line version of *Quadrat*, from which they are welcome to print as required.**

The Network is an informal grouping of people carrying out research in any aspect of the history of the book. The Network was originally established under the auspices of the former Book Trade History Group but now exists independently. Its aim is to provide informal contact and support to postgraduates, postdoctoral researchers and independent scholars working within the field of book history.

Benefits of membership include:

- Occasional updates by e-mail
- Study days (two per annum) – informal and enjoyable opportunities to share information on current research and discuss the practicalities of conducting research – **see below**
- A web-site – www.bhpn.bham.ac.uk
- A register of members' research (on the web-site)
- On-line access to *Quadrat*, the bulletin of current research on the history of the British book trade

There is no charge for membership. Study Days, usually held alternately in London and the provinces, are also free, although a nominal charge is made for refreshments. Members' research interests are very wide-ranging, in topic and in period, as a look at the Register of Research on the web-site will confirm.

For further information on the Network and its activities, or to join the Network on-line, go to www.bhpn.bham.ac.uk or write to Dr John Hinks, Department of English, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT

**The Postgraduate Book History Network invites
you to a STUDY DAY on Wednesday 12th
November 2003 in the Department of Typography
& Graphic Communication, University of Reading.**

Hear papers presented by other members of the network, take part in group discussions, listen to guest speakers, and meet fellow researchers!

The cost of the day is £5 per person, which will go towards lunch and refreshments.

To take part, simply email your name and contact details to n.robson@reading.ac.uk and send a cheque, payable to 'University of Birmingham', to John Hinks, at the English Dept., University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT

We look forward to seeing you in November!
Enquiries can be sent to Nicola Robson at n.robson@reading.ac.uk

CALL FOR PAPERS

We have space for four short papers (10 minutes maximum with short question and answer session).

If you would like to present a paper, please submit a short abstract to n.robson@reading.ac.uk **by 24 October.**

Those people selected to speak will be informed by 27 October.

To give a flavour of Network Study Days, reports follow on the very successful Study Days held at the University of Warwick and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

STUDY DAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

ON SATURDAY 18th JANUARY the Book History Postgraduate Network held a study day at the University of Warwick. Fourteen delegates at various points in their careers attended, including Masters and PhD students from around the country as well as a few more experienced scholars. The day was organised very informally by Maureen Bell and John Hinks, both from the University of Birmingham, along with Catherine Armstrong who was the local contact at Warwick.

Though previous study days have been centred round a theme, it was decided that the group would be small enough this time to allow a much more loosely structured programme. In the morning Maureen Bell introduced everyone to the workings of the Book History Postgraduate Network, summarising some of its achievements and aims. Then many of the delegates spoke to the rest of the group on the nature of their own particular research covering two main topics: practical issues that arise from archival research and theoretical difficulties, especially suffered by students who did not have a strong tradition of book history at their institution.

Just before lunch, the archivist at the Modern Records Centre on Warwick University campus gave a fascinating talk on the holdings of the centre, leaving many delegates wanting to return to undertake research of their own. During the afternoon, delegates once again shared problems together informally about their own research, with the more experienced members of the group often able to offer some troubleshooting suggestions. John Hinks also gave a brief talk on the role of the British Book Trade Index, updating the group on the progress of this massive project.

The day concluded with a number of the delegates retiring to the bar to discuss the role of the network in book history scholarship in general. The transitory nature of the postgraduate student body was highlighted, but it was thought that the establishment of a register of students' research interests, to be maintained by John Hinks, would

both provide information for conference organisers and help to end the isolation felt by some book historians. Finally, the next study day was set for London in early June and delegates left Warwick feeling that this gathering had been very productive.

Catherine Armstrong, *University of Warwick*

STUDY DAY AT THE V&A MUSEUM

The Book History Postgraduate Network held its latest Study Day in London, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, on Monday 2 June. The organisers were John Hinks (University of Birmingham) and Elizabeth James (V&A). Sixteen delegates attended; as before, a mixture of registered students and independent researchers at different stages in their projects. All present introduced themselves and gave a brief account of their current work, before the longer presentations. On this occasion we had people working on aspects of publishing, printing and bookselling history; book illustration, design and typography; the papermaking industry; concepts of authorship; small presses; and publishing in series.

Five 10-15 minute papers were presented. Tom Mole (Glasgow University) road-tested a brilliant post-doctoral proposal on authorship and attribution in the Romantic period, basing a new taxonomy upon a solid quantitative analysis. To hear a powerfully argued and planned outline at this level is of great benefit to those who are at earlier stages in their degrees. Alice Ford-Smith (Wellcome Institute) gave a paper on the fascinating subject of provincial execution broadsides, re-evaluating their worth and significance in relation to the ballads, which have overshadowed them in scholarly attention. Rathna Ramanathan (Reading University) presented the initial findings of her doctorate on the Gaberbocchus Press, a 20th-century artistic small press of great distinction and important associations. This was especially enjoyable as at lunchtime we were able to view a display of Gaberbocchus publications as part of our visit to the National Art Library.

For our visit also, NAL colleagues had prepared an extensive display of books to demonstrate the opportunities for book history research in the Library (which has now joined the Prints, Drawings and Paintings collections of the V&A to form a Department of Word and Image, furnishing even more opportunities especially in areas such as graphic design and illustration). Objects shown included private press books, children's books and chapbooks, artists' books, illuminated books, jobbing printing and trade literature, fashion magazines, bookbindings and comics, as well as manuscripts and editions indicating the work that might be done here on art publishing or art historiography. John Meriton, the Deputy Keeper of Word & Image, gave a talk explaining the recent changes in the Department, and an overview of the material available. Other members of staff were on hand to talk to delegates and answer questions.

There were two further presentations, from Catherine Armstrong (University of Warwick), who as an experienced researcher opened up some fundamental issues of wider interest raised by her specific work on the reading of early American immigrants: definitions and experiences of texts and their use that challenge our assumptions about what reading and reading material ordinarily consist of; the role of manuscript and the oral; how to validate deductions from evidence. Finally, Ian Brown took a break from his current research on 'editing the internet' to outline (impressively, from memory) a previous project on Tony Godwin, an innovative editor at Penguin Books in the 1960s. As before, it was an extremely stimulating day, and I for one returned to my own work full of new thoughts and connections.

Elizabeth James, *National Art Library, V&A*

CONFERENCE FELLOWSHIP Members of the Network working on the history of the book trade may be interested in the announcement of the Conference Fellowship offered to a postgraduate by the British Book Trade History Conference. **See page 21 for details.**

CONFERENCE REPORT

TEXTS, MA(R)KERS, MARKETS

King's Manor, University of York, 24-26 July 2003

UNLESS YOU WERE THERE, I'm afraid this is going to be one of those frustrating reports on a conference that has already happened and which you may well wish you had attended! Following on from two earlier conferences (which I did not attend) at Cambridge in 1998, and at St. Andrew's in 2001, the declared aim was to 'explore issues surrounding the material text, attending to its physicality, and to the relationships between writers, readers, publishers, printers and other textual ma(r)kers' – an aim of almost mindblowing breadth, which had the potential to turn into either an unfocussed mish-mash of unconnected papers or a memorable opportunity for stimulating interdisciplinary discourse. Happily it turned out to be the latter! All credit to the organizers, Matthew Day and Helen Smith, for an unusually imaginative and wide-ranging programme of papers with sufficient time for discussion and, importantly, enough 'space' for socializing and 'networking' (dreadful word, important activity!). Some of the papers are to form a special edition of the journal *Text*.

The programme of papers was complemented by optional visits to York Minster Library (happily recently saved from threatened closure) which was excellent, and to Castle Howard, which I didn't attend but am reliably informed was very enjoyable too. York Minster Library is a veritable treasure-house which deserves to be much better known; it is far wider-ranging than the typical cathedral library. I am very pleased that its future seems more secure than it did earlier this year but I think they must work hard at publicizing their collections. For example, readers of *Quadrat* may be as surprised as I was to find that York Minster Library houses a very sound collection of books on book-trade history, as well as impressive collections of playbills and Civil War tracts. (I don't know why – it's just the kind of library that has unexpected riches around every corner.)

The wide-ranging papers – in two parallel tracks – were generally of a very high standard; they were bound together by some excellent plenary sessions from Harold Love (the eminent book historian and professor emeritus at Monash University), Rita Copeland (Professor of Classical Studies and Chair in Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania) and James Raven (Director of the London Book Trades Project and of the Cambridge Project for the Book Trust).

Of particular interest to historians of the book *trade* was the final session of the conference, by James Raven. Speaking to the theme ‘Materiality and Commerce: Commodification in the English Book Trade, c. 1450-1850’, he ranged impressively throughout the stated time-span [how important it is to remember that the history of the book, and the book trade, go right back into the Middle Ages] and made more important points than I had time to make legible notes of! ‘Commodification’ was contrasted with commercialisation and some of the many changes in the book trade over this long period were clearly outlined. The various activities now known as ‘marketing’ all have their roots further back in time than is often realised and would merit further historical research, as would changes in purchasing power and the relative pricing of books. The question of how book-trade skills were sometimes (often?) learned from other trades was discussed all too briefly – another area perhaps ripe for research. Several of the speakers flagged up areas where research is needed. There should be no shortage of dissertation topics in the field of the history of the book, and the book trade, for many years to come!

The setting for the conference (the medieval King’s Manor, just across from the Minster), the fine sunny weather and the wonderful catering all contributed to a most enjoyable – and very informative – conference. Congratulations to all concerned. Look out for the next one in two years’ time, then you won’t have to read about it after the event!

John Hinks

READING IN THE SCILLY ISLES, circa 1739

Thanks to David Stoker for contributing this interesting item:

From the following anecdote, communicated to the Editor, by a clergyman who resided near the spot, we may judge that a small number of books have as many perusers as the largest collection can boast.

The whole library of one of the Scilly isles, constituted, about fifty years past, of the Bible, and the History of Dr. Faustus. The island was populous, and the western peasants being seldom deficient in literature, the conjuror's story had been handed from house to house, until, from perpetual thumbing, little of his enchantments, or his catastrophe, was left legible. On this alarming conjuncture a meeting was called of the principal inhabitants, and a proposal was made, and unanimously approved, that as soon as the season permitted any intercourse with Cornwall, a supply of books should be sent for. A debate now began, in order to ascertain what those books should be, and the result was, that an order should be transmitted to an eminent bookseller, at Penzance, for him to send them *another Dr. Faustus*.
James Petit Andrews, *Anecdotes &c.*, 1789, 257-8.

BIZARRE OCCUPATIONS IN BBTI

As we have toiled through BBTI, we have enjoyed the odd moment of light relief by noting some rather odd combinations of trades. Here are just a few examples:

Printer and pork butcher

Stationer and coal merchant

Publisher, poet, reformed highwayman

Antiquarian bookseller and mattress-maker

Printing and
the Book
in Manchester
1700–1850



Lancashire and Cheshire
Antiquarian Society

BOOK REVIEW

BOOK REVIEWS are always welcome in *Quadrat*. Please feel free to suggest titles for review and/or to volunteer to write an occasional review.

Printing and the Book in Manchester 1700-1850,

Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 2001. 222x145mm, pp. [iv], 200, ISSN 0950-4699, hardback, £18.00, illustrated.

THIS IS A MODEL of how to publish the book history of a particular town or region. Although it may not be immediately apparent from the book itself, this is actually a volume of the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*. The editors of this volume (who, very modestly, do not place their names on the title-page) are Eddie Cass and Morris Garratt. Details of the society and copies of the book may be obtained from the Hon. Treasurer, c/o The Portico Library, 57 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3HY.

For many readers of *Quadrat*, one of the highlights of this book will be the appearance of one of the last of Peter Isaac's many valuable published contributions to book-trade history. His chapter on 'The English Provincial Book Trade to 1800' is – unsurprisingly – a model of clarity; an excellent summary of its topic with, naturally, particular reference to Manchester and the surrounding area.

Although many of the contributors focus on aspects of book-trade history, this is definitely a history of the book in Manchester, including – as it quite rightly does – more than one chapter on the reading of books and newspapers, and a first-rate essay by Michael Powell on book ownership. I was particularly interested in Brian Maidment’s essay, ‘The Manchester Common Reader’, being already familiar with his work⁴ - here Maidment gives us a fascinating study of the activities of Abel Heywood, the eminent printer, publisher and wholesaler of newspapers and periodicals, of decidedly radical persuasion. Working in Manchester in the heyday of Chartism, Heywood played a significant role in the struggle for the freedom of the press; although imprisoned in 1834 for selling *The Poor Man’s Guardian*, Heywood was to become a prosperous businessman and civic figure.

The chapter by Eddie Cass, ‘The G.R. Axon Collection of Broadsides’, is a thorough account of a collection of 132 broadsides of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, collected by a former Manchester librarian. This is a wonderful – though tantalisingly brief – insight into the ‘street literature’ of Manchester.

Manchester has long been a very active centre of the book trade: there are almost 1,900 Manchester records in BBTI. Every essay in this collection offers a fresh insight into some aspect of the distribution and consumption of books and other printed matter in Manchester, complemented by a very useful ‘Preliminary Bibliography’ of the local book trade, compiled by Rod Evans of Chetham’s Library. This is a very readable and worthwhile publication; as a decently-produced hardback it is worth every penny of the modest cover price of £18.

NOTE: It was only after writing this that I realised that Peter Isaac had reviewed this publication in *Quadrat*, 16, pp. 22-25. I decided to use it anyway as it gives a slightly different view of the book.

John Hinks

⁴ Notably his excellent *The Poorhouse Fugitives: self-taught poets and poetry in Victorian Britain*, (Manchester 1987)

In their rightful place on the *back* cover: the BBTI Project Team!



Left to right (standing): Maureen Bell, Mike Parry;
(sitting): Betty Hagglund, John Hinks.

*You will find a couple of **BBTI bookmarks** enclosed. If you could make good use of a number of these to publicise BBTI at a conference or other relevant gathering, we can supply them.*

BOOKS FOR REVIEW SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR
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