

A Pedagogical Tool for Studying the History of the Book: Thirty-Five Years of Bibliographical Presses in Australia and New Zealand, 1977–2012

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In the early 1960s, Philip Gaskell conducted a survey of bibliographical presses in the English-speaking world.¹ Gaskell defined a bibliographical press as “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.”² Gaskell’s survey found a total of twenty-five presses that he deemed bibliographical. Sixteen of the twenty-five presses had been established in the years between 1960 and 1963. From these results, Gaskell concluded that there was a boom in the creation and subsequent operation of bibliographical presses in the early 1960s.

At the time of Gaskell’s survey, only five of the twenty-five total bibliographical presses were located in either Australia or New Zealand. These five were housed at the following universities: University of Auckland, University of Otago, University of Queensland, University of Sydney, and Victoria University of Wellington.

In 1977, however, B. J. McMullin conducted a follow-up survey that found thirteen bibliographical presses throughout the antipodes.³ To Gaskell’s original five, McMullin added eight bibliographical presses in the following locations: Australian National University, Massey University, Monash University, University of Adelaide, University of Canterbury (Department of English), University of Canterbury (Underoak Press, School of Fine Arts), University of Melbourne, and University of Tasmania. From the evidence, McMullin deduced that, at least in the case of Australia and New Zealand, the bibliographical press boom of Gaskell’s study took a small hiatus in the late 1960s and early 1970s followed by a second boom in the mid-1970s.

Finally, in the years between 2009 and 2012, Per Henningsgaard conducted yet another survey (the results of which are published for the first time in this article) to determine the fate of the bibliographical press in Australia and New Zealand. A questionnaire was sent to all the universities of Australia and New Zealand. What Henningsgaard found was that only two presses (University of Otago and Victoria University of Wellington) are functioning as bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand today.

¹ Philip Gaskell, “The Bibliographical Press Movement,” *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 1 (1965): 1–13.

² Gaskell, “Bibliographical Press Movement,” 1.

³ B. J. McMullin, “Bibliographical Presses in Australia and New Zealand,” *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 3.2 (1977): 55–64.

There are several reasons for the decline in bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand, but before proceeding any further it is important to establish one of the most basic reasons for what is, in fact, the *exaggerated appearance* of a decline: the title of “bibliographical press” was improperly applied in many instances in the earlier surveys. Gaskell’s definition of a bibliographical press has already been mentioned, and McMullin comes by his definition by directly quoting Gaskell. There is a serviceable definition, but it was applied in instances where it was clearly inappropriate. In these instances, the presses in question did not satisfy Gaskell’s and McMullin’s own requirement that a bibliographical press should be “carried on *chiefly* [emphasis added] for the purpose of demonstrating and investigating the printing techniques of the past.” In other words, these were not bibliographical presses since their primary purpose was something other than teaching bibliography.

Noel Waite, in his definition of a bibliographical press, would seem to agree with this interpretation that a press should only be considered a bibliographical press if its primary purpose is teaching bibliography. Waite writes, “In the 1960s several ‘bibliographical’ presses were established by those wishing, among other things, to teach the methods of textual transmission in the medium of print as practised in the handpress era.”⁴ There are two key elements to Waite’s definition. First, “among other things” acknowledges the fact that many of the presses, however antiquated, served purposes beyond bibliographical pursuits. Second, the phrase “to teach the methods of textual transmission in the medium of print as practised in the handpress era” addresses the role of the press in teaching bibliography. Indeed, Waite’s definition privileges the teaching of bibliography as the single most important feature constituting a bibliographical press, “among other things” that the press might be used for. Waite’s claim that the teaching of bibliography is most important “among other things” has a similar effect to Gaskell’s and McMullin’s use of the word “chiefly.” Therefore, unless the primary purpose of a press is teaching bibliography, it would be improper (according to Gaskell’s and McMullin’s definition, as well as Waite’s definition) to call it a bibliographical press; instead, they are “what might be called hobby presses” or private presses.⁵

To fail to understand this definition and, as a consequence, improperly apply it, jeopardises the efficacy of the survey results. For example, the inclusion of hobby or private presses in McMullin’s relatively small data pool skewed his results and led him to an inaccurate conclusion—namely, that there was a proliferation of bibliographical presses in the early 1960s, followed by a hiatus in the late 1960s

⁴ Noel Waite, “Private Printing,” in *Book and Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa*, edited by Penny Griffith, Ross Harvey, and Keith Maslen (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 1997), 83.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

and early 1970s, and finally a resurgence of bibliographical presses in the mid-1970s. Furthermore, since the three surveys mentioned above (i.e., Gaskell's, McMullin's, and Henningsgaard's) all aspire to exhaustiveness, then to admit into the definition of a bibliographical press those presses whose primary purpose is something other than teaching bibliography is to subvert their aspirations by creating an impossibly large task.

Turning now, with a reaffirmed sense of the definition of a bibliographical press, to the survey results, it is possible to see that only eight of the thirteen presses listed in McMullin's 1977 article ever functioned as bibliographical presses. McMullin writes in his introduction to this article that "two of the presses included are perhaps not primarily bibliographical, but I have preferred to err on the side of inclusiveness."⁶ He underestimates the number that were not bibliographical presses in large part because so many of the presses listed in his article had started up recently and it was unclear how they would be used. Indeed, the only exception to this rule was University of Sydney's press, which had been added to the list as part of Gaskell's original survey published in 1965. However, University of Sydney's press never operated as a bibliographical press. Even McMullin's 1977 article notes that the function of the press was "mostly informal printing by a group largely composed of Library staff" with "no formal teaching or research involvement."⁷

Other presses that never actually operated as bibliographical presses include Australian National University, University of Canterbury (Underoak Press, School of Fine Arts), University of Melbourne, and University of Canterbury (Department of English).

Since McMullin found only eight bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand in 1977, this means four were added in the wake of Gaskell's survey conducted in the years 1963 and 1964 (though not published until 1965). (In fact, Gaskell identified five presses, but the press at University of Sydney has been shown to be other than a bibliographical press.) However, Henningsgaard has added to this total two more bibliographical presses that were founded in the years following McMullin's 1977 survey: a press at Australian National University (different from the Australian National University press mentioned in McMullin's survey) and a press at University of Western Australia.

Figure 1 charts the duration of bibliographical press operation at each university; this figure includes the eight bibliographical presses that were listed in McMullin's article (though not the five that he listed that do not qualify as bibliographical presses) and the two bibliographical presses that were not listed in his article, for a total of ten bibliographical presses. Figure 1 clearly shows that three bibliographical presses were established in the early 1960s (the "boom of the

⁶ McMullin, "Bibliographical Presses," 55.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

early 1960s” mentioned by Gaskell and repeated by McMullin) and a further three were established in the mid-1970s (the “new boom of the mid-1970s” described by McMullin).⁸ While the “boom of the early 1960s” and the “new boom of the mid-1970s” certainly saw more presses established than any other period, labeling them boom periods is perhaps a bit of hyperbole. They must have seemed like boom periods at the time, but the peak of bibliographical press activity in Australia and New Zealand was, in fact, in the early 1980s when seven bibliographical presses were operating simultaneously—the most at any one time. Even so, much of the promise for the future of bibliographical presses remained unrealised. Certainly, that only two bibliographical presses remain in operation today in Australia and New Zealand is a sobering fact.

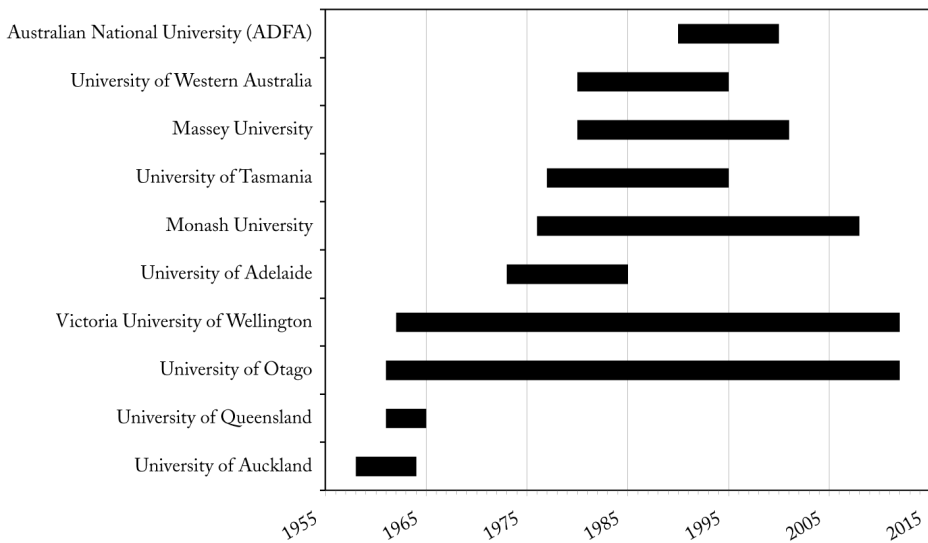


Figure 1: Duration of Australasian Bibliographical Presses since 1955.

Of course, the current state of bibliography in Australia is a separate thing entirely to the fate of its bibliographical presses. It could be said that bibliographical presses are simply one tool that can be employed by a teacher of bibliography. Since McMullin’s 1977 article, then, the authors of this article expected to see teachers of bibliography turn to other tools and methods for instruction in the history of the book.

Unfortunately, this was not the story told by the more than thirty respondents to the questionnaire Henningsgaard distributed. Admittedly, a couple said that the concerns of bibliography had simply been reframed as material cultures or textual cultures and, under these new titles, continued to be taught. But far more

⁸ Both uses of “boom” from McMullin, “Bibliographical Presses,” 55.

respondents spoke to the almost complete disappearance of bibliography's concerns from the curriculum. The following is a typical response: "Brief accounts of the process of printing and publishing have been incorporated in some subjects.... I'm not aware of the history of bookselling, typefounding, papermaking, bookbinding and textual bibliography having been taught." Another respondent noted, "Some [aspects of bibliographical instruction] have disappeared completely, but publishing history and textual bibliography are often covered in 'period' classes." Clearly, some concepts traditionally associated with bibliography are still taught in a piecemeal fashion, but the classes expressly devoted to bibliographical concerns have mostly disappeared. Moreover, the bibliographical press does not seem to have been replaced by other tools and methods for instruction in the history of the book.

Of course, it is hard to imagine any academic discipline existing in stasis. Change and development are integral to the kinds of productive scholarly conversations that should be taking place in an academic discipline. There are many ways in which this change happens, but one of the most interesting is pedagogical change. This process can be summarised as the evolution of teaching methods that include and exclude elements that are seen to be newly relevant or whose relevance has waned. The proliferation and subsequent decline of the bibliographical press as a pedagogical tool is symptomatic of this process; it exhibits a direct correlation with shifting concerns in the study of the history of the book. The primary cause for this change is the move from the exclusive interests of bibliography to the more inclusive field of book history. By examining this particular change, scholars can see how a specific instructional tool like the bibliographical press reflects and affects the changing concerns of the discipline.

W. W. Greg penned the classic definition of bibliography in 1932: "What the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his."⁹ This particular definition of bibliography can be more carefully characterised as a definition of analytical bibliography. The prioritisation of analytical bibliography goes a long way toward accounting for the increase in bibliographical press activity beginning in the early 1960s and peaking in the early 1980s. After all, "teach[ing] the methods of textual transmission in the medium of print," which is the *raison d'être* of the bibliographical press, does not require either teacher or student to be concerned with the meaning of the text being transmitted; in other words, "with these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks." However, by studying changes in the way in which bibliography has been taught—and, more specifically, changes in the use of the bibliographical press as a tool for research and instruction in Australia

⁹W. W. Greg, "Bibliography – An Apologia," in *Collected Papers*, edited by J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 247.

and New Zealand—it is possible to see a movement away from the prioritisation of analytical bibliography.

Book history gained prominence while bibliography as an independent discipline faded into the background during the 1990s.¹⁰ Arguably the most significant change associated with this shift is that book history recognises the importance of the “social and cultural history” of books.¹¹ This acknowledgment of the importance of the social effects of books means leaving behind Greg’s culturally divorced definition of bibliography in favour of a more inclusive (and interdisciplinary) view of book history.

The collection of essays contained under the title “The Future(s) of Teaching Analytical Bibliography: A Panel Discussion” directly addresses these developments—that is, it addresses the appropriation of traditional bibliographical concerns under the banner of book history. The panel discussion, conducted in 1995 at the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, was situated in an excellent temporal position to address these concerns. For example, Paul Eggert clearly recognises the tensions associated with the current position of analytical bibliography when he writes,

In their papers, both Brian McMullin and Chris Tiffin in their different ways tilt at forces which have been unsettling the consensus on which the bibliographical pursuit was built. For McMullin, “the book as object” remains “the basis for all bibliographic studies”—despite the literary and cultural theorizing of the last thirty years. Without bibliographical knowledge[,] one of the grand narratives of Western culture—the history of the book—cannot be intelligently understood.¹²

McMullin’s assertion about the necessity of studying the material book—and Eggert’s implicit endorsement of this assertion—is more reactionary than entrepreneurial; this sense is captured in the description of McMullin as vainly resisting forces of bibliographic change. Clearly, even its staunchest advocates recognise that bibliography has lost ground to book history. The bibliographical press, in its capacity as a pedagogical tool, reflects this changing concern in the discipline through its proliferation and subsequent decline.

One problem with the above explanation for the decline of bibliographical presses is that the skills and methods traditionally taught using bibliographical presses are still relevant to the study of book history. Admittedly, these particular skills and methods comprise a smaller part of book history’s expansive scope, but

¹⁰ David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, “Introduction,” in *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 1.

¹¹ Robert Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*, by Robert Darnton (New York: Norton, 1990), 1.

¹² Paul Eggert, “Introduction,” in “The Future(s) of Teaching Analytical Bibliography: A Panel Discussion,” *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin* 20.3 (1996): 204.

that should take nothing away from their relevance. Therefore, to attribute the decline in bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand solely to the shift in emphasis from bibliography to book history would seem to be an incomplete explanation. Clearly, a combination of factors played a part in the dormancy of so many bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand (though most can be related, in one way or another, back to the shift from bibliography to book history).

Amongst participants in Henningsgaard's survey of bibliographical presses, which was conducted in the years between 2009 and 2012, the most common explanation offered for the decline in bibliographical presses was the lack of staff to carry on the study of bibliography. For example, Mount Pleasant Press folded after its founder left University of Auckland in 1964 for an academic post in Canada. Similarly, Massey University's press folded in 2001 when its founder retired. This is not necessarily an indication of a lack of individuals in Australia and New Zealand qualified to operate a bibliographical press—though that could be part of it—but more so an indication of departmental priorities, as often the retiring individual's job was advertised with a different specialty. Of course, one reason why a department might desire this specialty over that specialty is the perception that one area of study is more in vogue than another, which appears to have been the case with bibliography.

Another factor contributing to the decline in bibliographical presses was the circumstances surrounding their foundation—circumstances that would change within a few decades, thus endangering the future of bibliographical presses. One such circumstance was the private press movement that first began in the 1960s.¹³ The bibliographical presses detailed in this article were associated with this movement in that many of them also acted as private presses and published works by writers and artists that were not part of the mainstream publishing enterprise of the day.¹⁴ For example, the bibliographical press at University of Otago printed works by James K. Baxter, including *The Lion Skin* and *Jerusalem Sonnets*.¹⁵ University of Adelaide's press and Australian National University's Open Door Press both published poetry by non-students. Open Door Press, in particular, was used to help young writers gain momentum and aid the poetry scene. They published a number of Australian poets, and the press may have been only briefly used for bibliographical instruction. Furthermore, Wai-te-ata Press at Victoria University of Wellington is well known for producing limited edition books of contemporary New Zealand poetry.

¹³ Anthony Grafton, "Introduction," in "AHR Forum: How Revolutionary was the Print Revolution?" *American Historical Review* 107.1 (2002): 84.

¹⁴ Waite, "Private Printing," 83–84.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Keith Maslen, "The Bibliography Room Press 1961–2005: A Short History and Checklist," *Script & Print* 30.3 (2006): 167–68.

A second, interlinked circumstance surrounding the foundation of bibliographical presses was the work of a new set of scholars, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, which sparked a new approach for studying the history of the book. As Anthony Grafton has observed,

No one did more to make this new field take shape than Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, whose massive two-volume survey *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* was first published by Cambridge University Press in 1979. In this work, which developed from a famous series of articles, Eisenstein ... helped to inspire a generation of younger scholars to integrate the history of books and readers into the study of intellectual and cultural history.¹⁶

By integrating the study of printing, which was part of the traditional mandate of bibliography, with the study of intellectual and cultural history, Eisenstein helped kick-start the shift from bibliography to book history. But, perhaps even more notably, her work also shone a light on how printing made social reformation possible because it allowed information to spread to a wide audience at a faster rate. Of course, this was not a new idea, since Lucien Febvre had introduced the concept that printing could revolutionise society with the publication of *L'apparition du livre* in 1958. Eisenstein's work has also been criticised as technologically deterministic.¹⁷ Nevertheless, she helped a new generation of scholars revisit the printing press and see the ways in which print could influence society. With the 1960s and 1970s being a hotbed for radical reform around the world, it is not hard to imagine the appeal of this particular idea. Indeed, the confluence of these two circumstances—the private press movement and new ideas about the influence of print—surrounding the foundation of bibliographical presses created a small explosion of interest in the printing press. This could explain why some universities began to acquire printing presses and look for ways to incorporate bibliography into their curriculum.

When recounting this sequence of events, it is important to remember that bibliography first began to take shape as a discipline in the seventeenth century and then only in the 1920s reached some sort of disciplinary maturity, after which time bibliographical presses did not take off until the 1960s.¹⁸ Since book history really only began to take shape as a discipline distinct from bibliography in the 1980s or even 1990s, it is possible we are in the middle of an analogous lag with regard to the pedagogical tools that will make this discipline appear more relevant

¹⁶ Grafton, "Introduction," 85–86.

¹⁷ For a summary of this particular line of criticism, see Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, "Introduction," in *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, edited by Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 1–12.

¹⁸ Grafton, "Introduction," 84.

to today's students. In the same way that the bibliographical press hitched its wagon to the small press movement and was, thus, connected to the spirit of its time, the discovery of a new pedagogical tool (or, perhaps, the rediscovery of an older tool) that connects with a recent social movement may invigorate the study of book history.

Several respondents to the most recent survey of bibliographical presses would seem to agree with this optimistic assessment. For example, one responded to the survey with the following observation: "With the present swing back to more empirical concerns (often via data analysis) the chance of book historical and bibliographic subject matter making some sort of come-back is better than it has been in a generation of English departments." He is not alone in this belief: another respondent remarked, "Now that we are in an era of digital and screen culture, it is possible that [bibliographical] presses may be used in courses comparing print and screen cultures or studying texts in their technological context." These two individuals' optimism about the place of book history instruction in a digital future is refreshing. It is also backed up by something American academic Jessica DeSpain wrote in a 2011 article titled "On Building Things: Student-Designed Print and Digital Exhibits in the Book History Class." DeSpain discusses the ways in which book history is becoming increasingly involved with developments in the digital humanities. She explains how, rather than using a bibliographical press, the hands-on component of a book history class at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville has students scanning books for digitisation.¹⁹

The example of DeSpain's book history class leads the authors of this article to ask, "What does our pedagogy reveal, intentionally or otherwise, about the habits of head, hand, and heart we purport to foster through our disciplines?"²⁰ This question comes from an edited volume titled *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*. The latest in a long series of educational philosophies, "signature pedagogies" are "the fundamental ways in which future practitioners"²¹ are taught "the habits of mind that distinguish each discipline."²² The contributors to the aforementioned edited volume use the concept of signature pedagogies to explain "how his or her discipline's usual pedagogy may be at odds with, or at least unsupportive of, these desired habits."²³ In other words, these contributors attempt to identify both a discipline's usual pedagogy and, more helpfully, a signature pedagogy that might be better suited

¹⁹ Jessica DeSpain, "On Building Things: Student-Designed Print and Digital Exhibits in the Book History Class," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 22.1 (2011): 25–36.

²⁰ Anthony A. Ciccone, "Foreword," in *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*, edited by Regan A. R. Gurung, Nancy L. Chick, and Aeron Haynie (Sterling: Stylus Publishing, 2009), xii.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, xiii.

²³ *Ibid.*

to encouraging in students the desired disciplinary habit of mind. With only one book published on the subject of book history pedagogy²⁴ and very few articles,²⁵ no one has tackled the task of defining book history's signature pedagogy. Nonetheless, it is not hard to predict what someone attempting to do so would identify as the habit of mind distinguishing book history from other disciplines: book history instructors are particularly eager to foster in their students a habit of mind that helps them recognise that the *context* in which a text is produced is at least as significant as the text's *content*. After all, amongst scholars of book history, it is this recognition that context matters that drives them to study, for example, a book's printing, binding, publication history, and so forth. So, if this is, indeed, a disciplinary habit of mind that is particularly characteristic of book history, then it seems likely that a signature pedagogy that is suited to encouraging in students this habit of mind would make use of the idea of context versus content. Without making any claims to authorship of an authoritative definition of book history's signature pedagogy, the authors of this article can think of no better way to teach students to value context than to engage them hands-on with a piece of that context. Surely, this educational philosophy resonates with those instructors who have used a bibliographical press as a pedagogical tool, as it undoubtedly will with those who engage in, for example, digitisation and mark-up of texts in the process of "teach[ing] the methods of textual transmission."

Having discussed the results of the survey, it is perhaps time to take a closer look at each of the bibliographical presses that has operated in Australia and New Zealand. The following list of bibliographical presses is arranged chronologically according to their foundation date, which is how it was done in McMullin's 1977 article. In constructing these summary histories of each bibliographical press, the authors of this article again followed McMullin's lead: "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."²⁶ However, on a few occasions, it was deemed important to attribute a direct quotation. A list of the thirty-five individuals who either completed questionnaires or were consulted in writing this article is given at the end of this essay.

²⁴ Ann R. Hawkins, *Teaching Bibliography, Textual Criticism, and Book History* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006).

²⁵ See, for example, Per Henningsgaard, "The Teaching of 'Book History' in English and Cultural Studies Units," in *Preparing for the Graduate of 2015: Proceedings of the 17th Annual Teaching Learning Forum* (Perth: Curtin University of Technology, 2008), <http://otl.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2008/refereed/henningsgaard.html>.

²⁶ McMullin, "Bibliographical Presses," 55.

1. University of Auckland

University of Auckland's bibliographical press, founded in 1958 by William J. Cameron and sponsored by the English Department, was included in both Gaskell's and McMullin's articles on the subject of bibliographical presses. However, McMullin notes in his 1977 article that "information for the period after 1963 is unavailable."²⁷ The reason information was unavailable was because Cameron left University of Auckland in 1964, at which time the bibliographical press folded. "Methods and Techniques of Scholarship," a master's-level bibliography class developed by Cameron and offered for the first time in 1959, also ceased to be offered following his departure. University of Auckland's bibliographical press (originally named the Auckland University Bibliographical Press though later renamed Mount Pleasant Press) is currently on display in Alfred Nathan House, known to staff and students as the Registry. It has not operated as a bibliographical press since 1964, nor has a bibliography class been offered at University of Auckland since this date.

It is worth mentioning, as well, that Holloway Press was established on the Tamaki Campus of University of Auckland in 1994. Holloway Press is a private press, rather than a bibliographical press, since there is no student involvement. Following a donation of equipment (including an Asbern cylinder proofing press and a Columbian press) by Ron Holloway of Griffin Press, the press was managed by poet and printer Alan Loney up until 1998, at which point there was a hiatus in its activities before Tara McLeod took over operations in 2001. The Director through all of this has been Peter Simpson, who as a member of the Department of English was responsible for repatriating the press into the department if not into the curriculum. The press produces one or two limited edition books per year.

2. University of Queensland

University of Queensland's Shapcott Press, founded in 1961 by Harrison Bryan, then University Librarian, was used to teach bibliography to fourth-year honours students in English. McMullin's 1977 article describes the activities of the press as follows: "Before 1973 some limited edition works were produced; since 1973 only some jobbing work on the Makar Press."²⁸ However, further investigation reveals that the press ceased to function as a bibliographical press as early as 1965. Bryan left University of Queensland for University of Sydney in 1963, leaving the press in the hands of Bryan's former student Brian Donaghey. When recently asked about this event, Donaghey reported, "Since I was left as the principal person familiar with the press and typesetting, I was asked to take over the use of it for bibliographical instruction." This arrangement did not last for long: "I left the university in 1964 to take up a teaching position, [but] I remained in contact

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

with the university and helped with more student projects.” Indeed, Donaghey continued to help with student printing projects until 1965, which is the last time the Shapcott Press imprint appears in a publication. The most recent available information is that the press is now located at the Southbank Institute of TAFE’s Morningside campus, though this is unconfirmed. However, if the press is, indeed, located at the Southbank Institute of TAFE, it is presumably used as part of their vocational training programme in printing and graphic arts, rather than as a bibliographical press.

3. University of Otago

University of Otago’s bibliographical press is one of the most well-documented bibliographical presses operating in all of Australia and New Zealand. For a detailed treatment of the history of the press up to 2005, readers should consult Keith Maslen’s article, “The Bibliography Room Press 1961–2005: A Short History and Checklist,” published in a 2006 issue of *Script & Print*. The article takes its title from the name of the bibliographical press, The Bibliography Room Press, though its original name was The Press Room (with The Backside Press making a one-off appearance in 1963); the name was changed in 1966 to The Bibliography Room Press and then again in 2005 to Otakou Press. David Esplin, then Reference Librarian, and Keith Maslen of the English Department founded the press in 1961. It was continued by Maslen as it shifted in 1965 from a washhouse at the rear of the building occupied by the English Department to the university library. Since its inception, the press has been used continuously for the purposes of “teach[ing] literary students the fundamentals of the processes by which the texts embodying our literary heritage were transmitted from author to reader in the medium of print.”²⁹ This mission has remained constant through several changes in staff and location: Maslen’s retirement in 1991 and the appointment of Shef Rogers; a move in 2002 to new quarters in the university library and the subsequent installment of Donald Kerr as the university’s first full-time Special Collections Librarian with special oversight of the press; and the incorporation of the press with University of Otago’s newly established (in 2011) Centre for the Book. Yet, in his article about the press, Maslen notes that “the heyday of the Bibliography Room was during the 1960s and 1970s.”³⁰ Currently, the press operates as a bibliographical press—that is, “to teach the methods of textual transmission in the medium of print as practised in the handpress era”—only once a year when Rogers takes a group of third-year students enrolled in the “Approaches to Writing about Literature” class to the pressroom. At other times of the year, the press is used for occasional job printing, Centre for the Book keepsakes, Christmas cards, and other ephemera. In 2003, a Printer in Residence

²⁹ Maslen, “Bibliography Room Press,” 157.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

scheme was established that sees the press used by a visiting artist for a period of four to six weeks beginning in August of each year.

4. Victoria University of Wellington

On 22 March 2012, Wai-te-ata Press at Victoria University of Wellington celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding by D. F. McKenzie in 1962. And while University of Otago's bibliographical press might have one year on Victoria University of Wellington's press, the latter certainly takes the prize for being the most active bibliographical press operating in all of Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore, its history is equally well documented via the Wai-te-ata Press website (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/wtapress>). The history of the press spans the careers of three directors: McKenzie until 1986, Roderick Cave until 1993, and Sydney Shep from 1995 (following a two-year hiatus in activities) until the present. This fact alone is cause for wonderment, since the history of bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand is filled with examples of presses that have folded after their founders retired or moved on; University of Otago's bibliographical press is a rare exception, but to have weathered two such changes in leadership, as Wai-te-ata Press has done, is a singular achievement. The press has also moved physical locations several times, landing in 2008 in the university library. But by far the most remarkable aspect of the history of the Wai-te-ata Press is that it has actually become more active as a bibliographical press since the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, no fewer than three undergraduate and honours-level classes routinely use the press as an integral part of their instruction, and two postgraduate classes use the press. The press is used to teach a great variety of topics, including bibliography, typography, design, and publishing, and it has even been incorporated into classes taught by staff in Asian Studies, Art History, Information Studies, and more. However, the press is best known for its production of limited edition books of contemporary New Zealand poetry, which is perhaps symptomatic of its origins in an English Department, as well as the institutional support it currently receives from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington.

5. University of Sydney

After founding University of Queensland's bibliographical press in 1961, Harrison Bryan took a job as University Librarian at University of Sydney and proceeded to found another press in 1963. The foundation date of the press means this was the fifth and final Australian and New Zealand press included in Gaskell's 1963–64 survey of bibliographical presses in the English-speaking world. However, University of Sydney's press never operated as a bibliographical press. The press, which started as Fisher Press and changed to Piscator Press in 1964 when it was discovered that there was a commercial business in Sydney already called Fisher

Press, folded in 1995. Its catalogue of works is almost entirely composed of a series of pamphlets, none more than eight pages in length. Yet, it has been reported that the press is currently undergoing conservation and refurbishment and will likely be reinstated sometime in 2013. But unless a bibliography/book history/print culture class is added to the list of offerings, which would be an unprecedented move at University of Sydney, the press is unlikely to ever fully realise the title of bibliographical press.

6. University of Adelaide

The bibliographical press at University of Adelaide was the first bibliographical press established following the publication of Gaskell's 1963–64 survey of bibliographical presses. The press, which was originally housed in the English Department, was restored to working order in 1972 when it was shifted into the Barr Smith Library. In 1973, Alan Brissenden used the press for teaching purposes for the first time. In particular, he taught bibliography to honours English and postgraduate Library Studies students. Groups such as the Friendly Street Poets also used the press for occasional printing. Since the mid-1980s, however, bibliography has ceased to be taught as a stand-alone subject at University of Adelaide, and the press has been used only intermittently for demonstrations to students from the English Department and Library Studies. Currently, elements of bibliography are briefly covered in English Department classes dealing with Textual Culture and Early Modern and Mediaeval Studies.

7. Australian National University (Open Door Press)

The Australian National University press listed in McMullin's 1977 article never actually operated as a bibliographical press. Among its three founders—Paul Balnaves, Alan Gould, and David Brooks—the latter two are poets, and when asked recently about their motives for founding the press, Gould responded, "Our original motive in acquiring the machine and fonts was that of young writers wishing to empower themselves with a printing machine that would aid the strong poetry scene existing in Canberra at that time." The press, which was founded in 1974 and went by the name of Open Door Press, was certainly a success by this measure, publishing many of Australia's leading poets including A. D. Hope, Judith Wright, Gwen Harwood, David Campbell, Les Murray, Bruce Beaver, Vincent Buckley, Kevin Hart, and more. In terms of its utility as a bibliographical press, however, Brooks reports that "for some period between 1975 and 1977 or 1978, the Open Door Press was used to demonstrate basic printing methods to students of the Department of English at the ANU, but this can't have been more [than] a brief, one-session insert in some other course." Around 1980, while Brooks was in Canada doing postgraduate work and later teaching, Gould and Balnaves discontinued their involvement with Open Door Press. They gifted

the press to the English Department at Australian National University; prior to that, the English Department had given Open Door Press a room rent free, but did not actually own the press. When Brooks returned to Canberra in 1986, he discovered the press sitting unused in a basement and subsequently reclaimed it in 1988 or 1989. Brooks brought it with him to Sydney when he relocated there in 1991, but he ended up donating the press to the New South Wales Writers' Centre, which later gave it to the Museum of Printing in Penrith, New South Wales. Consequently, the role of the press has shifted from being a pedagogical tool to a static display piece.

8. Monash University

Australia's best-known and most active bibliographical press was founded in 1976 by Professor Jean P. Whyte in the Graduate School of Librarianship at Monash University. Since then, it has changed names once (from The Bibliographical Laboratory to Ancora Press), changed locations twice (from the Main Library on the Clayton Campus to the Menzies Building virtually next door, to its current home in the Faculty of Art Design and Architecture [sic] on the Caulfield Campus), and, most dramatically, changed functions—from a bibliographical press to a tool for artist printmaking, which is symptomatic of a wider, global reinvention of letterpress printing.

At the time of McMullin's 1977 article on bibliographical presses, he was able to record that the one-year-old press had been founded "under the auspices of a committee ... which includes a member of the University Library and a member of the Graduate School of Librarianship."³¹ He also noted that the press was used for "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)."³² Clearly, English and Librarianship feature prominently in the history of this particular bibliographical press, as they do for many of the presses detailed in this article. Unmentioned in McMullin's history of Monash University's bibliographical press, however, is the important role played by scholars of French at Monash University. Specifically, these scholars pushed for the creation of a Master of Arts by coursework and minor thesis—a first for Australia when it was launched in 1966—that would feature reference and physical bibliography as part of the curriculum. Scholars of French at Monash University took their inspiration from a prominent, contemporary movement among French scholars, known as the *Annales* school, which studied the history of the book using quantitative social history methods. At virtually the same time that this degree programme was being proposed, the *Australian Journal of French Studies* issued a special number on the subject of bibliography

³¹ McMullin, "Bibliographical Presses," 61.

³² *Ibid.*

in 1966. All of this, then, is part of the background to the 1969 creation of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand and its journal—which, not coincidentally, has always “had a Melbourne emphasis, and within Melbourne a Monash University emphasis.”³³ It is also part of the background to the establishment of Monash University’s bibliographical press in 1976. This sequence of events led, in no time at all, to Monash University staff member Wallace Kirsop distinguishing himself as a leader in the study of bibliography in Australia; more specifically, especially within the bounds of Monash University, he was identified with a French approach to studying the history of the book. His institutional compatriot, McMullin, was equally strongly identified with the school of physical bibliography, since he oversaw the day-to-day operations of the bibliographical press and taught classes titled “Bibliography and Textual Scholarship” (within Librarianship) and, later (when the collaborative MA was introduced), “Analytical and Descriptive Bibliography.” In view of bibliographical instruction at Monash University becoming so strongly identified with these two individuals, as well as with Harold Love, the history of bibliographical presses in Australia and New Zealand would lead one to expect their retirement to signal the demise of the university’s commitment to bibliography and its bibliographical press. However, this has not been the case. Rather, their connection remained strong through the establishment in 1981 of the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies operating in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University. The Centre offered an inter-departmental MA degree with four classes: “Analytical and Descriptive Bibliography,” “Textual Studies,” “Booktrade History,” and an appropriate elective—plus a thesis. This was closed down in 1997 for not meeting minimum enrollments. At the same time, McMullin retired from teaching, but he continued to oversee Ancora Press operations and work in an administrative capacity. When the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies was reshaped in 1998 as the Centre for the Book within what had become the School of English, Communications and Performance Studies, still Kirsop’s and McMullin’s connection appeared solid and the bibliographical press was operating for its intended purpose, though in a reduced capacity. So when, in 2008, Kirsop, who was at the time Director of the Centre for the Book, stepped down and changed his affiliation back to the French Department, this seemed an especially significant move. At the same time, McMullin, who was then Deputy Director of the Centre for the Book and manager of Ancora Press, moved to the Faculty of Art Design and Architecture. Clearly, the Centre for the Book had embarked on a new direction, which resulted in it handing over control of Ancora Press to the Faculty of Art Design and Architecture. When asked recently about the function of the

³³ B. J. McMullin, “Forty Years On: The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand and its Journal,” *Script & Print* 35.2 (2011): 106.

press in its new home, Carolyn Fraser, a sessional instructor within the Printmedia [sic] area of study in the Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, remarked,

It was of interest to the school to include the teaching of letterpress printing within their printmedia curricula. This interest comes not from traditional bibliographic interests, I would argue, but from a growing interest in the art world in books and the production of limited editions. Which is bibliographic, I guess, but not in the manner that I understand bibliography to be taught within library schools.

In this respect, Monash University's press has joined the ranks of several other presses mentioned in this survey that are used primarily for instruction in art and design, rather than bibliography. Nonetheless, the press continues to be used for informal printing, mainly by those with librarianship connections, and informal instruction in bibliography to interested parties, including attendees of the Australian and New Zealand Rare Book Summer School. For those participating in these activities, a recent highlight was the receipt of a benefaction that enabled Ancora Press to buy new type and better paper and to have some items professionally bound. The only undergraduate class with a book history focus that is presently taught at Monash University is "Print Cultures: Books as Media" in the Communications and Media Studies programme, which does not include any instruction in physical bibliography.

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

Like University of Sydney's Piscator Press and Australian National University's Open Door Press, University of Canterbury's Underoak Press never really operated as a bibliographical press, in spite of having been included in McMullin's 1977 article. Instead, Underoak Press was established in 1976 by Max Hailstone under the auspices of the School of Fine Arts in order to teach printmaking and design. At the time of McMullin's survey, the School of Fine Arts had nine presses; this number has never been reduced, though some of these presses are now reportedly in storage. Presently, the presses at University of Canterbury are used to teach primarily intaglio and lithography.

10. University of Tasmania

University of Tasmania's New Albion Press was reportedly founded by members of the English Department in 1977 just as McMullin's survey of bibliographical presses was about to go to press. McMullin reports that its intended function was "teaching bibliography and typography to fourth-year honours students in English," and, even more ambitiously, "printing results of bibliographical research in Victorian fiction, and other works of literary, scholarly, and occasional interest."³⁴ At the time that McMullin's article was published, however, he was able

³⁴ McMullin, "Bibliographical Presses," 63.

to report only that “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.”³⁵ The planned poetry collection appears to have been realised in the form of a 1978 publication, *Poems in Honour of James McAuley*, a tribute to the Australian poet and former head of the English Department at University of Tasmania, which features works by well-known Australian poets such as A. D. Hope, Geoffrey Dutton, Les Murray, and Bruce Beaver. However, there is no record of “a bibliography of the valuable collection of nineteenth-century fiction in the Mechanics’ Institute Library” ever being produced. Indeed, the only other book produced by New Albion Press appears to have been the 1982 publication of *Music in the Mirabell Garden*, with words by Georg Trakl and translation by James McAuley, though the single printer listed for this book, John Winter, suggests that it was not a project carried out when the press was functioning as a bibliographical press for the instruction of students. Nonetheless, Winter, who was the driving force in the English Department for the establishment of a bibliographical press, taught a class on the subject of bibliography that utilised the bibliographical press up until his retirement in the mid-1990s. Contrary to McMullin’s prediction, this class was offered to pre-honours undergraduate students, rather than to honours students. Unfortunately, no one at University of Tasmania knows the current whereabouts of the New Albion Press. Furthermore, there are no bibliography or book history classes currently being taught at University of Tasmania, though a limited amount of information on printing processes is covered in the honours-level class “Research Methodology and Scholarly Editing.”

11. Massey University

In 1977, McMullin was able to say of Massey University’s bibliographical press only that “at the time of the enquiry the Press was in the process of being set up, under the auspices of the English Department.”³⁶ When the press was finally established by John C. Ross in the English Department (now the School of English and Media Studies) in 1980, it was given the name Allde Press, after the Elizabethan printer Edward Allde, who was followed into the trade by his widow. The story of Allde Press is a classic among bibliographical presses: it lasted only as long as its founder. When Ross retired in 2001, both Allde Press and the paper in the honours- and postgraduate-level “Scholarship” class that dealt with palaeography, bibliographical analysis and description, and principles of scholarly editing, ceased to be offered as options for Massey University’s students. Indeed, due to insufficient demand, the last time the paper had been offered was 1998.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

When asked recently about the demise of bibliographical instruction at Massey University, Ross expressed regret but admitted that “a significant proportion of the students taking postgraduate courses in the Humanities through Massey ... are distance students,” and bibliography the way he taught it “is too hands-on to be teachable in distance mode.” Presently, the press at Massey University sits unused in a basement room in Old Main Building. When Allde Press was operational, however, it was used to print short poems, greeting cards, leaflets, and mementos.

12. University of Melbourne

Curator of Special Collections at University of Melbourne, Pam Pryde succinctly relates the history of the university’s press: “There is a press, but it has never been used as a bibliographical press, even though that was the intention when it was first acquired by the Friends of the Baillieu Library in 1976.” It seems not much has changed since McMullin wrote the following in his 1977 article about bibliographical presses:

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.³⁷

The lack of movement in this regard is likely attributable to the total absence of bibliography classes at University of Melbourne. Perhaps the only thing remarkable about University of Melbourne’s press is how little it has actually been used; not only has it never functioned as a bibliographical press, but nothing has been printed on it since the press was first restored and some experimental printing was done. Nonetheless, the Friends of the Baillieu Library recently expressed interest in having a tympan and frisket made for the press (these have been lacking since the press was first acquired), with the aim of having an operational press for demonstration purposes and perhaps to print from for special occasions.

13. University of Canterbury (Department of English)

Neither University of Canterbury’s previously mentioned Underoak Press in the School of Fine Arts, nor its press in the Department of English were ever used as bibliographical presses. R. F. Stowell was the owner of one of the three presses (a small table model Excelsior press and two Albions) in the Department of English and instigator of plans for a bibliography class, but his Green Leaf Press South imprint was only ever associated with a hobby press, never a bibliographical press. Then, even the hobby press folded in the early to mid-1980s because

³⁷ Ibid.

the equipment was so seldom used. The presses were subsequently donated to Ferrymead Heritage Park in Christchurch, New Zealand.

14. University of Western Australia

The only university not featured in McMullin's 1977 article that later came into possession of a bibliographical press is University of Western Australia. Dorothy W. Collin at University of Western Australia established both a bibliography class and a bibliographical press in 1980. The press at first resided in the Arts building on campus, though it was later moved to a shared space with the university's scholarly publishing house, University of Western Australia Press. The press was used as part of a stand-alone bibliography class offered to honours and master's students. The class covered descriptive bibliography, bibliographical and book history research, editorial principles, physical construction of the book, and so forth. These objectives were achieved, in part, through the printing of short pamphlets using an Albion hand press. Following Collin's retirement in 1995, the press was donated to the State Library of Western Australia and the bibliography class has ceased to be offered. Bibliography is now taught at University of Western Australia in a far more limited way under the "Advanced Research Skills" class.

Interestingly, another Western Australian university—Curtin University of Technology—has expressed an interest in acquiring the printing press that is currently sitting unused in the basement of the State Library of Western Australia and putting it back to use as a bibliographical press. Their thought is that it could be used for the book history class that is offered by Information and Library Studies, as well as for a book design class that is offered by Art and Design Studies. Additionally, Tim Dolin would like to introduce a bibliography class in Literary and Cultural Studies. However, a lack of available space and an endangered Literary and Cultural Studies programme mean this plan is unlikely to be carried out.

15. Australian National University

(English Department, Australian Defence Force Academy)

There is another chapter in the history of printing presses at Australian National University that is not even hinted at in McMullin's 1977 survey. Beginning in 1990, students in Paul Eggert's honours- and master's-level class "Literary Scholarship and Criticism" at University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy annually participated in a collective typesetting exercise using the printing press at the Canberra Institute for the Arts. In this respect, the press functioned as a bibliographical press, as the purpose of the exercise was to produce an editorial edition of a multi-state work or text-critical discussions of several verses of a work; editing and textual criticism were the central concerns of the class. The class produced short pamphlets—most of them bound, some

in leather—on an annual basis. When, in 1992, the Canberra Institute for the Arts became part of Australian National University, Eggert's students continued to use the press on an annual basis. In fact, this arrangement continued until 2000 when Eggert ceased to offer the class. The printing press itself, which was installed at the Canberra Institute for the Arts in the late 1980s, continues to exist as a teaching tool in Australian National University's School of Art. It is used to teach students in the Book Arts class, as well as in the brand-new Typography class, how to set type and print. When asked recently about the possibility of incorporating bibliographical instruction into these art classes, Caren Florance, who is the instructor of both classes, said that she is particularly hopeful that the Typography class will "attract English students who are interested in physical bibliography, and [she] want[s] to talk about book history to art students as well." Of course, only time will tell how successful she is in this regard; the history of bibliographical presses is full of people with good intentions that, for one reason or another, cannot be realised.³⁸

³⁸ Acknowledgements: Graham Barwell, Neil Boness, David Brooks, Dorothy W. Collin, Ralph Crane, Kieran Dolin, Tim Dolin, Brian Donaghey, Paul Eggert, Maggie Exon, Caren Florance, Carolyn Fraser, Nathan Garvey, Alan Gould, Cheryl Hoskin, Stephen Innes, Donald Kerr, Wallace Kirsop, Tobey Macguire, Keith Maslen, Tara McLeod, Brian McMullin, Howard McNaughton, Philip Mead, Ian Morrison, Simone Murray, Pam Pryde, Christine Richardson, Shef Rogers, John C. Ross, Sydney J. Shep, Cathryn Shine, Patrick Spedding, Rodney M. Thomson, and W. D. Thorn.