

The Industrial Revolution of the Book: Cheap Print and New Readers



Professor James Raven

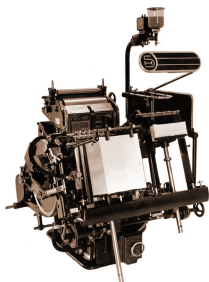
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China in the World Building, ANU, Fellows Lane, Building 188 (near Law School)

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PUBLIC LECTURE



Unlike the coming of print (woodblocks in second-century East Asia and thirteenth-century Europe; moveable type in eleventh-century China and fifteenth-century Europe), the second mechanized, industrial revolution in book production was experienced worldwide in one century. It was, nonetheless, hugely variable in its regional adoption and impact. This nineteenth-century transformation has been identified with publishing capitalism, and yet its history is many-faceted, with complicated antecedents. In Britain, Australia and, a little later, China, technological bravura led the revolution, its products sometimes dismissed as industrial literature. Thomas Carlyle in Britain and cultural pessimists around the globe denounced the new machinery as spitting out mechanised minds, devaluing literature and learning, and replacing craftsmanship (in writing as well as in publishing) by the robotic and the mass produced. The unprecedented cheapness of industrially printed materials encouraged more to read but also developed a greater sense of the indeterminacy and anonymity of the reading public.

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CONFERENCE WEBSITE: <http://ciw.anu.edu.au/events/2014/readingconference/>