

A History of Printing

1500 BCE – 1900

A timeline compiled by Benjamin Thorn

c1500 BCE A clay disc that may have been used for printing dating from this era was found in Crete in 1908.

c105 CE Tsai Lun invents paper in China.

c400 Wei Tang perfects ink for woodblock printing in China.

c770 Earliest surviving printed matter, Buddhist charms printed from woodblocks in Japan.

868 Earliest surviving printed book, a Chinese version of the Diamond Sutra.

1041 Pi Sheng makes individual type characters from hardened clay in China.

1150 The first European paper mill in Spain.

c1200 Metal type is used in Korea, China and Japan.

c1300 Wood cuts of religious images are printed in Europe.

1397 Oldest surviving text printed from metal type in Korea.

c1430 Earliest surviving European block books printed from wood cuts.

c1440 Gutenberg develops printing from movable type in Mainz.

1446 Earliest dated intaglio (engraved) print.

c1447 Earliest surviving European printing from movable type, '*Fragment of the World Judgement*'.

1456 Printing of the 42-line Bible (Gutenberg Bible) possibly by Gutenberg, but probably by his associates, Fust and Schoeffer.

c1464 Development of Roman type later perfected by Jenson in Venice.

1465-1473 First printing presses established in Italy, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands and Spain.

c1475 First book printed in English by Caxton *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye*.

1476 Caxton establishes first printing press in England.

1476 First printed music using movable type, this was plainsong notation and involved two passes through the press.

1486 First secular censorship office established in Frankfurt and Mainz. (The first book banned was the *Bible* in the vernacular!)

c1500 Development of Italic type by Aldo Manutius in Venice.

1539 First printing press in the Americas in Mexico City.

1586 First music printed from engraved copper plates.

1638 First printing press in North America in Massachusetts.

c1701 Invention of stereotype (moulded plate cast from an impression of the set type) by Johann Muller in Leyden.

1795 First printing in Australia.

c1798 Lithography invented by Alois Senefelder.

1814 First steam powered cylinder press. It could print 1,100 sheets per hour.

1822 Type founding machine invented by William Church trebles the amount of type that can be made in a day. He also invented a typesetting machine which unfortunately was not practical for commercial use.

1830 Invention of powered platen press.

1839 Development of sensitising process photoengraving by Ponton.

1847 First rotary press with type carried on a cylinder invented by William Hoe. It could print 22,000 sheets an hour.

1852 Invention of photoglyphic engraving process by Talbot.

1856 First web (reel fed) press invented by William Bullock in the United States.

1857 Stereotypes first used in newspaper printing. In 1861 curved stereotypes were used on rotary presses.

1866 First practical composing machine invented by Hattersley. Type still had to be justified and distributed by hand.

1886 Linotype machine, which casts whole lines of type as a slug, invented by Ottmar Mergenthaler in Baltimore.

1887 Monotype machine, which casts individual pieces of type in justified lines, invented by Tolbert Lanston.

1892 First process colour printing which allowed for realistic colour printing with just four colours

c1905 Offset lithography invented by Rubel and others.