

Before we begin with the basics I want to acquaint you with a brief history of the publishing industry, which has had a long and glorious run from neolithic times to today.

**In The Beginning** - The first books were scrolls of demotic script written by scribes employed by the pharaohs of Egypt as long ago as 4,000 BC, and are the earliest known records kept on a material other than stone. Before that, many of the earliest records and books were carved into wax and stone by the ancient Sumerians, in what is modern Iraq. The first ancient laws on the books were written there and were used to spread a system of law across the known world.

As the Egyptians and Greeks conquered more and more territory, they brought writing to the early dynasties of Mongols, who in turn gave rise to China. Soon after that, the Chinese developed their own system of writing and record keeping, and are famous for keeping the earliest known astronomical almanacs and horoscopes in the world.

As successive dynasties were born, and the Greeks and Romans began to flourish and broaden their empires, writing and books became necessary to maintain an educated nobility and bureaucracy. Greek slaves knowing how to read and write enjoyed the same privileges as Roman nobles. While this was going on, successive Persian and Chinese conquerors made good use of these skills. There was no common language yet, so letters exchanged among the kings and emperors were translated. The translations were written down by the scribes to keep a record of what was said and bound into books. Tibetan priests kept records of the history of their region on folded sheets of parchment or palm leaves, bound between two boards and tied with silk.

There was no formal system of education then, so the only people who could read or write were from the upper classes. The peasants were allowed a cursory oral education from the temple priests, who selected only a few to become scribes.

Around 200 AD the Chinese developed the wood block printing method, a technique for printing text, images or patterns on textiles and later paper. The wood block method was to pass ink over a carved plate of wood, then lay down a sheet of rice paper and allow it to absorb the ink. The result speeded up the process of copying. The earliest surviving examples from China date to before 220 BC, and from Egypt to the 4th century AD.

**The Middle Ages** - When the Roman empire fell in the 4th century AD, there followed a period of "darkness", that is: we don't really know how many books were written or kept during this time. In 415 the archbishop Cyril declared many books of the world to be evil and ordered the Library of Alexandria to be burned, and in the conflagration thousands of scrolls and valuable books kept there were destroyed. It is rumored that many of these scrolls found their way into the hands of men who had more secular views, and who were able to escape into the hinterlands to preserve as much as they could. But I guess we will never know the truth about that.

From the 7th to 13th century AD, the age of religious "manuscript" book production began. Books in this period are entirely constructed by hand, and were largely religious texts whose creation was meant as an act of worship. Christian monks occupied themselves with creating beautifully illuminated manuscripts and copied what was then a coptic bible for distribution to priests, abbots, kings and their courts. These books were reserved only for the nobles and bureaucracy because the peasants were not considered worthy of receiving a formal education.

Notable among these books are *The Book of Kells*, and *The Book of Durrow*, which were hand inscribed and illustrated from scratch each time. One could not really call them copies. Each of these books was meticulously hand lettered and painted, then heavily embellished with thin sheets of gold leaf. And by gold I mean 24 carat, not the cheap stuff in use today. The miniature versions you see now are but pale shadows of the massive volumes which were the originals. There are other books of this type in existence, but many have fallen into disrepair or been destroyed by age, war, and neglect.

There was also little incentive to distribute the books to the general public due to the lack of access to the monastic libraries. Given the amount of time and energy and financial resources that went into their production, books were far too valuable, so there was no way to use them for scholarship. This problem was compounded by the lack of a uniform cataloging system in the monasteries. Even if one did have access, there was no way of knowing what was in the collection, or where it might be located. And as most monasteries were insular and preoccupied with self-examination before God, they were unwilling to open up their doors and allow free access to laymen.

Screen printing first appeared in a recognizable form in China during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD). Japan and other Asian countries adopted this method of printing and advanced the craft by using it in conjunction with block printing and hand applied paints. Screen printing was introduced to Western Europe sometime in the late 18th century, but did not gain large acceptance or use in Europe until silk mesh was more available for trade from the east. Screen printing was first patented in England by Samuel Simon in 1907.

The world's first known movable-type system for printing was created in China around 1040 AD by Bi Sheng (990–1051) during the Song Dynasty. Then the first metal movable-type system for printing was made in Korea during the Goryeo Dynasty (around 1230). This led to the printing of the Jikji in 1377—today the oldest known movable type print book. The diffusion of both movable-type systems were limited They were expensive and required an enormous amount of time and labor to manipulate the thousands of ceramic tablets in use, or in the case of Korea, metal tablets.

Notice I have not even mentioned Gutenberg yet.