

1-1-1945

Let us ignore the most important feature of the book

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Recommended Citation

Grabhorn, Edwin E. and Wellesley College. Annis Press, "Let us ignore the most important feature of the book" (1945). *Book Arts Ephemera*. Book 1.

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LET US IGNORE THE MOST IMPORTANT feature of the book: its contents, or literary quality; for in this article we are concerned only with the printer's part in its creation. If we compare the growth of a book to a tree, we may liken its back to the trunk of the tree; the covers to its branches; and the spreading of the leaves to its pages. A tree is strong, sturdy and complete in itself, able to withstand the vicissitudes of time. A book to be enduring must first be strong, and to be strong, its growth must be slow. The paper on which the book is to be printed cannot be of a poor quality such as newspapers are printed on; nor shiny, because very smooth paper reflects light, which is hard on the eyes. We will want the paper a warm white, for if there is blue in it, the type will look as though it were printed on ice.

Having selected, then, a warm, strong paper of a weight such that when the book is opened, the leaves will fall of themselves, and not stand up like a bound volume of playing cards, our next step is the selection of

the type. The type also must be strong but not heavy; and it should be free from novelty. For we must always remember that printing is a mechanical invention for reproducing thought, and we have no right to be obscure. The type must be set so that the spaces between words are distinct separations; yet not so far apart that it is closer to the next line than to the next word. This type is firmly impressed into the paper, so that it becomes a part of it. The ink on the type must be enough to cover the surface of the page, but not so much as to glisten. The fine book does not need pictures, but if we want illustrations, they should be done through a close collaboration between the artist and the printer. The pictures must become a part of the book, and not be inserted haphazardly throughout the text. This fine book is a unit, remember, and we cannot tolerate foreign elements.

The binding covers must be firmly attached to the back of the book— so firmly that they cannot be pulled off even if the end-sheets have not been pasted

down. If you examine the binding on the average book, you will find that if with a knife you cut the two endpapers at the joint, the book will pull apart. The fine book should be practically indestructible. The first book printed from movable types is the so-called Gutenberg Bible, printed in two large folio volumes. Of this book, no less than 42 copies exist today. Under the circumstances, not more than 250 copies can have been printed, and it is doubtful whether the originators of this publishing venture could have found purchasers for more than 100 copies. If we assume that 250 copies were printed, then nearly one-fifth of the copies of that first book printed 400 years ago still exist! And it is only during the last century that special protective devices for the preservation of books have been used.

A well-made book is one of the most durable objects made by man. If the present-day printer can recapture the strength and durability of the 15th century printer without stealing his types and designs, but put

something of his own day and age into his books, he will not have to worry about recognition. His future is assured.

We have often been asked why we came to San Francisco to print books. It may sound like a Chamber of Commerce boost, but the two things which attracted us most were climate and competition. From the discovery of gold to the present day, San Francisco has always appealed to and supported the craftsman. Not the least important of her craftsmen have been the printers, and the keener the rivalry the better the work. Without excessive heat or cold, San Francisco's damp, cool weather is especially beneficial to the best kind of printing.

With such natural advantages, and with a growing, appreciative audience, there is no reason why, in another century, San Francisco cannot become the seat of a permanent Renaissance, with a culture that will grow and grow until it becomes the illumination of the world.

First student printing. Edwin Grabhorn on the Book
1941-5