

**BOOK
COLLECTING
A MODERN GUIDE**

Edited by Jean Peters

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Marbles be in London? Ought the Victory of Samothrace grace the staircase of the Louvre? Why find the most beautiful head of an Egyptian queen in Berlin? The list of questions is endless, and the answers provided by history are circumstantial. If, in a shrinking global world, national boundaries could be ignored, and the kingdom of the creative spirit were established as exemplified in objects and written traces, then indeed the questions would not be raised. If sensitive minds, coupled with an optimal 20/20 vision, were brought to bear upon a global heritage, even the most poetic question printed below would not wait for an answer.

In a letter sent at the end of 1885 to William Sharp, who compiled an anthology of sonnets, Oscar Wilde incorporated one of his own sonnets. If only collectors of literary manuscripts could engrave the postscript on their walls in durable matter!

ON THE SALE BY AUCTION
OF KEATS'S LOVE LETTERS

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret, and apart.
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note.
Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price: I think they love not art,
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat!
Is it not said that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or his woe?
I wish I could grave my sonnets on an ivory tablet. Quill pens and
notepaper are only good enough for bills of lading.

Descriptive Bibliography

Terry Belanger

THIS CHAPTER IS CONCERNED primarily with descriptive bibliography, especially with the terms that the book collector must master before he or she can use descriptive bibliographies intelligently and read booksellers' catalogues wisely. For this purpose, we need to sharpen the definition of such a common word as *edition*. Publishers tend to use the word rather loosely, but *edition* has a precise bibliographical meaning. An *edition of a book* is *all copies printed at one or later times from the same setting of type*. Within an edition, all copies printed *at any one time* are called an *impression*. A number of impressions from the same setting of type may be produced over a period of many years, but they are all part of the same edition, because the type itself is identical in each of these impressions. In 1866, for instance, Thomas MacKellar wrote and published a manual of typography called *The American Printer*. He had electrotype plates made from the original setting of type, and over the next dozen years or so, he issued nine further impressions of *The American Printer*, making only the occasional minor correction between one impression and the next. These nine later impressions were identified on the back of the title pages as the second through tenth editions; but only in 1878, when he thoroughly revised and reset his text, did he produce in bibliographical terms his second edition—called on the title page the eleventh edition. Again electro-

typing the setting of type used in this edition, Mackellar put out seven further impressions of the second edition—labeled the twelfth through eighteenth editions on the back of the title pages.

An *issue* is that part of an edition offered for sale at one time, or as a consciously planned unit, and an edition is occasionally sold by means of several different issues. Different issues within an edition will be largely the same, but they might, for example, have different title pages, one giving the name of a New York publisher for distribution in the United States, the other giving the name of a London publisher for distribution in Great Britain. Sometimes books are later remarketed with slight additional matter or with a new title page date. In 1842, the London publisher Henry G. Bohn reissued Charles Timperley's *Dictionary of Printers and Printing*, which had originally been published in 1839. Bohn replaced the original title page with a new one and changed the title of the book to *An Encyclopaedia of Literary and Typographical Anecdotes*, and he added a 12-page supplement at the end. In all other respects, the two issues—both using the same sheets printed in 1839—are identical.

Issues are usually determined by the publisher or publishers *after* the book has been printed. Where there is a substantial difference in the printed text of two copies of a book, we are dealing, not with different issues, but with different editions.

State refers to the minor differences in the printed text between one copy and another of the same book. When an error in the text is discovered during the printing of the pages, for example, the press is stopped long enough to make the correction. Sheets printed before the error was noticed constitute the uncorrected state; sheets printed after it was caught constitute the corrected state. Thus in the first Shakespeare folio of 1623, page 277 is incorrectly printed 273 in a few copies. Clearly, the error was caught early in the pressrun, because most surviving copies have the correct page number. Variant states generally occur in the printed sheets, before they go to the binder, and before publication. Variant states are caused *before* publication, just as variant issues are caused upon or after publication.

These terms—edition, impression, issue, and state—are important to the book collector because they help describe priority of publication. Collectors tend to desire the earliest form in which a book was published, preferring the uncorrected state

of the first issue of the first impression of the first edition to all later ones. From the general *reader's* point of view, this attitude is silly: Why not collect the most correct edition, rather than the earliest one? William Matheson has dealt with the logic (and illogic) of book collecting in Chapter 1 of this book, however, so my task here is not to defend the sometimes seemingly indefensible preferences of collectors, but rather to lay out the vocabulary used to determine and describe these preferences.

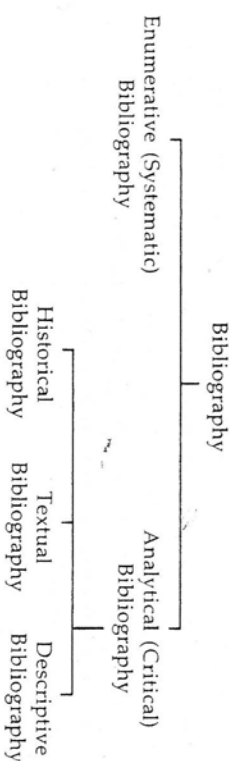
To the book collector, the word *bibliography* properly means *the study of books*; a *bibliographer* is one who studies them. But the word is shopworn. *Bibliography* has many common definitions, and because collectors, scholars, and librarians too often use the word indiscriminately, it lacks precision. For this reason, *bibliography* generally attaches itself to qualifying adjectives like *enumerative*, *systematic*, *analytical*, *critical*, *descriptive*, *historical*, or *textual*.

Some definitions of the resulting, frequently found compounds are in order. The two main sorts of bibliography are:

1. *Enumerative bibliography*: the listing of books according to some system or reference plan, for example, by author, by subject, or by date. The implication is that the listings will be short, usually providing only the author's name, the book's title, and date and place of publication. Enumerative bibliography (sometimes called *systematic bibliography*) attempts to record and list, rather than to describe minutely. Little or no information is likely to be provided about physical aspects of the book such as paper, type, illustrations, or binding. A library's card catalog is an example of an enumerative bibliography, and so is the list at the back of a book of works consulted, or a book like the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, which catalogues briefly the works of English writers and the important secondary material about them. Many examples of subject-oriented enumerative bibliography are given in G. T. Tanselle's chapter "The Literature of Book Collecting" in this book.

2. *Analytical bibliography*: the study of books as physical objects; the details of their production, the effects of the method of manufacture on the text. When Sir Walter Greg called bibliography the science of the transmission of literary documents, he was referring to analytical bibliography. Analytical bibliography may deal with the history of printers and booksellers, with the description of paper or bindings, or with textual matters

arising during the progression from writer's manuscript to published book. Analytical bibliography (sometimes called *critical bibliography*) may be divided into several types, as follows:



Historical bibliography: the history of books broadly speaking, and of the persons, institutions, and machines producing them. Historical bibliography may range from technological history to the history of art in its concern with the evidence books provide about culture and society.

Textual bibliography: the relationship between the printed text as we have it before us, and that text as conceived by its author. Handwriting is often difficult to decipher; compositors make occasional mistakes, and proofreaders sometimes fail to catch them; but (especially in the period before about 1800) we often have only the printed book itself to tell us what the author intended. Textual bibliography (sometimes called *textual criticism*) tries to provide us with the most accurate text of a writer's work. The equipment of the textual bibliographer is both a profound knowledge of the work of the writer being edited (and of his or her period) and an equally profound knowledge of contemporary printing and publishing practices.

Descriptive bibliography: the close physical description of books. How is the book put together? What sort of type is used and what kind of paper? How are the illustrations incorporated into the book? How is it bound? Like the textual bibliographer, the descriptive bibliographer must have a good working knowledge of the state of the technology of the period in order to describe a book's physical appearance both accurately and economically. Descriptive bibliographies are books that give full physical descriptions of the books they list, enabling us to tell one edition from another and to identify significant variations within a single edition. Good descriptive bibliographies are therefore indispensable to book collectors, whatever their fields of interest and whatever the time period their collections cover. Unfortunately, good descriptive bibliographies do not exist for

all fields and for all periods, and, as a result, collectors must frequently do their own spade work, learning enough about the techniques of descriptive bibliography to distinguish among editions, issues, and impressions without outside help. The bulk of this chapter therefore concerns itself with the vocabulary of descriptive bibliography, concentrating on the earlier periods of bookmaking (because a chronological understanding of the structure of books is essential), but also sketching in the relationship between the handmade and the machine-produced book.

Analytical bibliography is concerned with the whole study of the physical book: its history, its appearance, and the influence of the manner of production on its text. The three types of analytical bibliography—historical, descriptive, and textual—are all closely interrelated. It is lunatic to attempt to draw overly precise distinctions among them. They are equally important as aids to our understanding of books.

Further discussion of the various sorts of bibliography may be found in Roy Stokes' *The Function of Bibliography* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969).

In the creation and dissemination of a printed book, many persons take part: to move from book production to distribution, they may include (besides the writer) the typefounder, the papermaker, the printer, the illustrator, the binder, the publisher, the retail bookseller (or librarian), and the book collector (or library reader). Each of these individuals can affect the physical book as it comes to us—some more than others, to be sure. But all need to be accounted for if the complete history of a book is to be known and described.

The Typefounder's Role

In the first half century or so of printing (the period before about 1500) printers frequently cast their own type, but specializations within the graphic arts industries developed quickly, and by the end of the sixteenth century, most printers were buying their type from typefounders, who issued specimen sheets of their wares for the printers to choose from. Gutenberg used black-letter type, but in most countries except Germany, the Roman letter quickly superseded black-letter types, and it is with various forms of the Roman letter that we are concerned with in the printing of most books.

Descriptive bibliographers attempt to describe early and later typefaces exactly, and there is an extensive literature on this complicated subject; one might begin with *Printing Types: An Introduction* (Boston: Beacon, 1971) by Alexander Lawson. But most book collectors are unconcerned with the minutiae of type description unless they collect very early printed books, for which a knowledge of type styles is essential in dating and in the determination of the place of printing.

The Papermaker's Role

Before the early nineteenth century, all paper was made entirely by hand on a mold, one sheet at a time. The sheets used in book work varied in size from about 12 × 15 inches to about 19 × 27 inches; larger sizes (though they were very expensive) were available for special work. Most paper made before 1800 contains *chain lines*, the faint, parallel lines, about an inch apart, revealed when the sheet is held up to a light. The chain lines are a reflection of the ribs of the paper mold; the paper is thinner at the points directly over these ribs than it is elsewhere on the sheet. The dimensions of printing papers are almost always in the ratio 3:4. If, for example, the shorter side of the sheet is 15 inches, then the longer side will be about 20 inches. The ribs of the paper mold creating the sheet are always parallel to the short side of the sheet, and—whatever the size of the sheet—the pattern of chain lines on it will always appear as in Figure 1.

A sheet of handmade paper often contains a *watermark*, a design (like chain lines, revealed when the paper is held up to a light) caused by a corresponding wire pattern fastened to the surface of the paper mold. There may also be a *countermark*, caused on the surface of the paper by a corresponding wire pat-

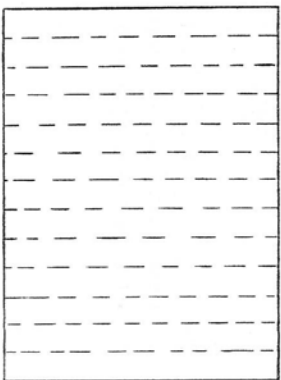
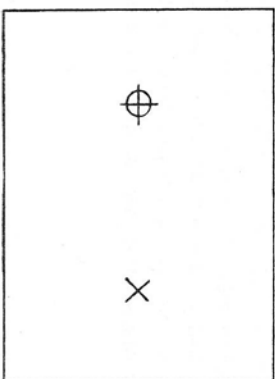


FIGURE 1

tern fastened to the end of the mold opposite the watermark, which sometimes gives the name of the maker of the paper or the date of manufacture or licensing. The most usual position of the watermark and the countermark are as shown in Figure 2.

The standard introduction to the history of paper and papermaking is Dard Hunter's *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* (2nd ed.; New York: Knopf, 1947); this is the first book you should read on the subject, perhaps skipping the long sections on non-Western paper the first time through. Only one further point needs to be made here. Beginning in about 1760, papermakers learned to produce wove paper on molds of wire mesh; paper made on such molds does not have chain lines (though it may have watermarks and countermarks), and it tends to have a somewhat smoother surface than laid paper (that is, paper with chain lines). Technological developments in the early nineteenth century allowed wove paper to be manufactured in endless webs on large, automatic machines. These machines created paper without chain lines, but (for aesthetic reasons) false chain lines were occasionally pressed into the paper with a dandy roll.

Machine-made paper can be cut to any size for printing, but sheets so made differ from handmade paper in that they have no *deckles*, the uneven, feathery edges always found on all four sides of handmade sheets and produced by the peculiarities of the hand paper mold. Books printed on handmade paper are frequently trimmed after the folded sheets have been sewn together, to remove the deckle and produce neater edges. A book whose leaves have not been trimmed is called *untrimmed* or *uncut* (the words are exactly synonymous), terms not to be confused with *unopened*, which describes a book having the folds of the sheets still intact at the top and outer edges. An



⊕ = watermark

X = countermark

FIGURE 2

unopened book cannot be read, because the folds prevent you from opening certain of the pages; an uncut book will nevertheless have opened pages and can be read very easily.

The Printer's Role

The great watershed in printing, as well as in papermaking and binding, is the beginning of the nineteenth century. The period before about 1800 is generally called the handprinting period; the later period is called the machine-printing period. Terms like *folio*, *quarto*, and *octavo*, although still frequently (and imprecisely) used today to refer to the size of a book, have specific bibliographical meanings reflecting the practices developed during the handprinting period.

Pre-1800 printers first had to determine the *format* of the book—the manner in which the whole sheets of paper were to be printed. They might decide to print the sheets in such a manner that the binder would be presented with piles of printed sheets each of which was to be folded once down the middle, parallel to the short side of the paper, forming sections or *gatherings* each of two leaves totaling four pages. Because a book is made up of a number of these folded sheets or gatherings, the printer would often identify each sheet with a letter or number at the bottom of the first page; these marks are called *signatures*. By assembling the folded sheets in the order indicated by the signatures, the binder could be sure that the book was put together in the right order.

A book made up of sheets folded once, with two leaves totaling four pages per sheet, is called a *folio*, abbreviated f° or 2° (that is, two leaves/sheet).

The size of the sheet determined the size of the resulting book. If the printer wanted a large book he would start with a large sheet, and with a smaller sheet if he wanted a smaller book. Not all large books are folios; only books made up of whole sheets folded once can properly be so described. The sloppy tendency to describe any large book as a folio must be avoided. The word has a specific and unvarying definition: a book made up of whole sheets folded once. If the original sheet is 20 × 28 inches, the size of the book will be 20 × 14 inches; if the original sheet is 12 × 16 inches, the size of the book will be 12 × 8 inches—but both books are folios.

A folio book consisting of 280 pages contains 70 sheets of paper folded to make 140 leaves. The binder would receive the

book from the printer as 70 different piles of printed sheets. To produce one copy of the book, he would take one of each of the 70 different sheets, fold each of them once, and sew them together one at a time through the folds. Because this meant a lot of sewing, printers frequently arranged the printed pages in such a way that the binder was to put two or more gatherings one inside the other *before* sewing. That is, instead of gatherings each of one sheet, two leaves, and four pages, each gathering would consist of (say) three sheets of six leaves and twelve pages. In this instance, the first leaf of the second sheet would be signed A2, and the first leaf of the third sheet would be signed A3, so that the binder would be sure to put one folded sheet inside the others in the right order, as in Figure 3. The three sheets of the second gathering would be signed B1, B2, and B3 and assembled in the same manner, and so forth through the entire book.

A book in folio format made up of gatherings each containing three printed sheets is called a folio in 6s, because there are six leaves in each gathering; a folio made up of gatherings each containing six printed sheets is a folio in 12s, and so forth. A folio book of 400 pages where each gathering contains two sheets would contain 100 sheets ($\frac{1}{4} \times 400$ pages) and 50 gatherings (2 sheets/gathering); the same book in which none of the sheets were quired together would contain 100 gatherings.

When the printer wanted a smaller and more convenient format than folio, he could set his pages in type and *impose* them (lock them up for printing in the right position) in such a way that the binder had to fold each of the printed sheets twice, creating gatherings of four leaves totaling eight pages. This format is called *quarto*, or 4°. Most quartos are smaller than most folios. But if the original sheet is a large one of 20 × 28 inches,

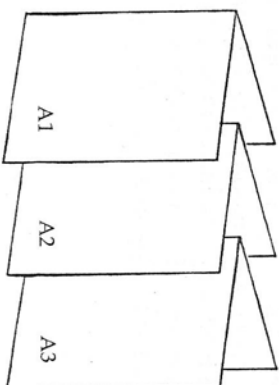


FIGURE 3

for example, each single folio leaf produced from the sheet will be 20×14 inches and each quarto leaf 14×10 inches. If the original sheet is a small one of 12×16 inches, then each folio leaf will be 12×8 inches in size. The quarto leaf in the first case is larger than the folio leaf in the second. But the difference between quarto and folio and the other formats is generally easy to determine during the handprinting period, for the evidence provided by chain lines and watermark enables us to distinguish among them. Because the chain lines in laid paper are always parallel to the short side of the sheet, folio format will *always* produce gatherings where the chain lines run vertically up and down the leaves; the watermark and countermarks (if present) will appear approximately in the middle of the page, as in Figure 4. In quarto format, the sheet is folded twice, the chain lines are horizontal, and the watermark will be in the gutter of the gathering, halfway up the leaf, as shown in Figure 5.

It is much more difficult to determine the format of books made of wove paper, especially if they have been trimmed, removing the deckle. Because format is decided not by the size of the leaf but by the evidence of chain lines, watermarks, and

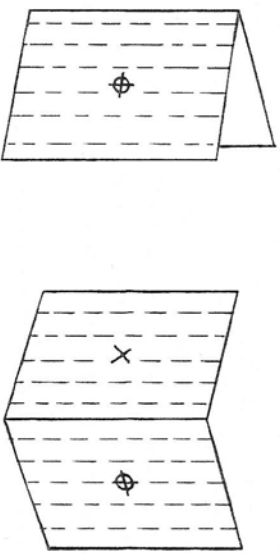


FIGURE 4

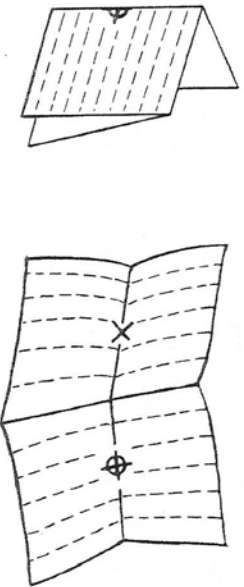


FIGURE 5

deckles, it is not usually possible to determine the format of nineteenth-century books that lack these features. Books printed on paper produced in endless rolls are not given a format at all—the best one can do is to give the exact size of the leaf in inches or centimeters.

The Collational Formula

The details of the physical makeup of sheets in a printed book are called its *collation*, and the format and collation of books may be (and frequently are) expressed by means of a shorthand formula. Thus a book in folio made up of nine gatherings signed A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I can be succinctly described as follows:

2°: A-I²; 18 leaves

The leaf count properly is always present, given after the collation; the one serves as a check on the other (9 gatherings times 2 leaves equals 18 leaves).

The letters J, U, and W are latecomers into the Roman alphabet, and printers have traditionally left them out when assigning signatures to their gatherings of folded sheets. Thus the following formula:

4°: A-Z⁴; 92 leaves

is the one you would expect to find for a book containing 23 quarto gatherings. Where the book has more than 23 gatherings, the signatures may proceed by doubling: after signatures X and Y and Z, we find signature AA (or Aa or a variant). The attempt of the collational formula is always to be as brief as possible; thus instead of:

2°: A-Z²AA-ZZ²AAA-BBB²; 96 leaves

the following simple condensation is used:

2°: A-3B²; 96 leaves

Some lengthy books must use five or even more complete alphabets in giving every signature its unique designation. American printers often simplified the signing of their gatherings by using numbers instead of letters. The formula:

2°: 1-48²; 96 leaves

describes a book with exactly the same format and collation as

2°: A-3B²; 96 leaves

The printer's tendency, especially when working on the first printed edition of a book, is to begin the setting of type and the printing of the sheets with the first page of the text proper, saving the preliminary pages containing the title page, the table of contents, the dedication, the list of subscribers, and so forth, until after the text is completed. By this method the author has until the last possible moment to make up his or her mind what to say in the preface, or to whom to dedicate the book, and so on.

This manner of proceeding is reflected in the collation of a book. The printer will often arbitrarily assign the signature B or C (or 2 or 3) to the first gathering of printed text proper, reserving the letters A or A and B (or the numbers 1 and 2) for the preliminary gathers to be printed later. But the preliminaries frequently take up more pages than the printer has allowed gatherings. So he may sign the preliminaries with lowercase letters:

4°: a-d⁴B-1⁴K²; 50 leaves

Sometimes the very first gathering is not signed at all; it may be the title page, which the printer prefers not to deface with a signature:

4°: [a]⁴b-d⁴B-1⁴K²; 50 leaves

Either brackets or italics may be used to indicate unsigned gatherings, where there is no question what the signature should be. Where the signature cannot be inferred, the Greek letter π (π) is used to indicate a *preliminary*, unsigned gathering:

2°: π^2 A-R²; 38 leaves

that is, an unsigned gathering of two leaves before 18 signed gatherings; or

2°: $\pi^2\pi^2$ A-1²; 22 leaves

that is, for two preliminary unsigned gatherings before nine signed gatherings. Another Greek letter, χ (χ), is sometimes found in a collational formula. It indicates an unsigned gathering found elsewhere than at the beginning of the book:

2°: π^2 A-G² χ^2 H-1²; 22 leaves

Such gatherings may occur simply because the printer forgot to indicate the signature, or because the author had afterthoughts that needed more space than the original plans called for. The binder may not be pleased when he encounters the unsigned gatherings, but he does have the page numbers of the book to

quently were not). He also has the *catchword*, the first word of the following page printed after the text at the bottom of the preceding page, as a check that he is assembling the book in the proper order. Catchwords were commonly used until the end of the eighteenth century; they are uncommon during the machine-printing period.

If the printer chooses to use *octavo* format, he will impose his pages in such a way that the binder must fold each sheet three times, creating eight leaves and 16 pages in each gathering. The collational formula describing a typical octavo (abbreviated 8°) book might be:

8°: a-b⁴B-H⁸I²; 34 leaves

In octavo format, the chain lines on each leaf will always be vertical, and the watermark if present will be divided among various leaves in the upper inside corner of the gathering, as in

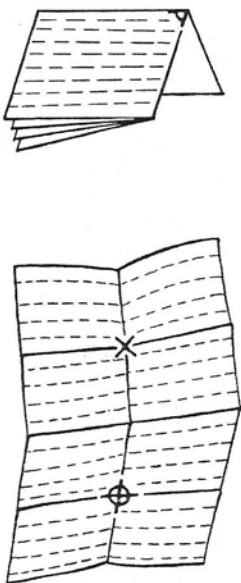


FIGURE 6

Figure 6. A more complicated octavo book might have the following formula:

8°: $\pi^2\pi^2\pi^4\pi^2$ B-F⁸ χ^2 G-R⁸S⁴; 142 leaves

that is, a book in octavo format consisting of an unsigned first gathering of two leaves, a second unsigned gathering of four leaves, a third gathering of two leaves signed at the bottom of the first page with an asterisk, five gatherings signed B through F of eight leaves each, an unsigned gathering of two leaves, eleven gatherings of eight leaves each signed G through R, and a final gathering of four leaves signed S. In all cases, the chain lines of the gatherings would be vertical. Thus the first π gathering is made up of a quarter of a whole sheet, and the final S gathering is made up of a half sheet—but both are octavo in format.

Why would the printer bother with the complicated preliminaries:

when he could simply have one gathering signed A of eight leaves? There could be many reasons for this apparent inefficiency: π^2 may be the half-title and the title page, printed at the very last minute; $2\pi^4$ might be the dedication, the text for which was prepared long in advance and that was set into type and printed at once, before anything else. The two-leaf asterisk gathering might be the table of contents, a substitution for an earlier, *anceled* pair of leaves in which a major mistake had been discovered, necessitating the change. The leaf or leaves removed is called the *cancelandum*; the leaf or leaves replacing the *cancelandum* is called the *cancelans*.

To continue with standard formats, we next have the situation where the printer imposes his pages in such a way that the binder must cut or fold the sheet parallel to its long side into thirds, and then fold the sheet twice the other way, creating 12 leaves totaling 24 pages. The chain lines will be horizontal and the watermarks, where present, will appear on the outer margin, about a third of the way from the top or bottom edge of the leaf. This format is called *duodecimo*, or 12°. The collational formula describing a typical 12° book might be:

12°: A-H¹²; 96 leaves

Frequently duodecimo books are printed on half sheets of paper, producing gatherings of six leaves:

12°: π^2 A-T⁶; 118 leaves

The intricacies of duodecimo and other formats not mentioned here may be studied in detail in such books as Philip Gaskell's *New Introduction to Bibliography* (corrected edition; Oxford: Clarendon, 1974). During the handprinting period, folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo were the major formats; but there were many others: 16°, 24°, 32°, and so forth. After the introduction of large metal printing machinery in the nineteenth century, very large sheets of wove paper cut from endless rolls were used in printing, and the sheet might be imposed in such a way that it was meant to be folded many times, creating gatherings of 32 or even 64 pages. But there is a law of diminishing returns: If there are too many folds to be made, the binder will have a difficult time beating the gatherings into manageable shape. A typical nineteenth-century book might have as its collation:

9° × 6": [A]⁸B-R⁸S⁴; 140 leaves

Because there are no chain lines or deckle, and because the paper in the book is likely to have been machine-made, we cannot give the format, only the size of the leaf. This book has a preliminary unsigned gathering of eight leaves which we infer as the A gathering, followed by 16 gatherings each of eight leaves, concluding with a final gathering signed S of four leaves, for a total of 140 leaves.

The printer is always interested in imposing his pages of type so as to produce an economical and logical format and collation. But simplicity is not always possible in first editions in particular, the more so when the author insists on extensive corrections in proofs, causing the canceling and the replacement of individual leaves or whole gatherings. But although the first edition of a book might have as its collation the following:

4°: $\pi^2 2\pi^2 a-c^4 d^2 B-M^4 N^2 O-R^4 S^2$; 82 leaves

later editions of the same book, containing an exact resetting of type in a page-for-page reprint, would be reimposed more simply, producing a collation like the following:

4°: [a]⁴b-d⁴e²B-R⁴; 82 leaves

where the text proper in both instances begins with the first leaf of the B gathering. The reader of these two editions would not be likely to notice the difference in collation—but the book collector is very much interested in the difference, because the first is very much more likely to be the first edition (whether or not it is so labeled) than the second.

Without having recourse to page numbers (for there may not be any or they may be inaccurate), each page of a book may be described in bibliographical terms, using the collation. In the following:

8°: [A-B]⁸C-Y⁸; 176 leaves

the eight leaves of, for example, the D gathering are called D1, D2, D3, D4. . . . D8. Right-hand, or *recto*, pages may be distinguished from left-hand, or *verso* ones: D1^r, D1^v, D2^r, D2^v, D3^r . . . D8^v. Thus F8^v will face G1^r. In all of these gatherings, the first and eighth leaves will be connected to each other through the spine, as will the second and seventh, the third and sixth, and the fourth and fifth leaves. These pairs of leaves are *conjugate* with each other, joined by the fold. In a standard quarto gathering, leaves 1.4 and 2.3 are conjugate.

Canceled leaves may be indicated in the collational formula:

8°. [A]¹B-C⁸D⁸(±D7)E-H⁸, 60 leaves

indicating that the original seventh leaf of the D gathering has been removed and replaced, usually by pasting the cancellans (or replacement leaf) to the stub of the cancellandum (or removed leaf).

A final, important point about collations. They are used to indicate the *ideal copy* of a book, that is, the complete book as intended by the printer, when his part is done. Sometimes the binder will remove final blank leaves, or conjugate leaves containing advertisements, and a book which began life as:

4°. a-b⁴B-M⁴, 52 leaves

might in many copies be lacking a1 (a blank leaf) and M3 and M4 (four pages of advertisements). The collation of the book is nevertheless as given here, and *not*:

4°. a³b⁴B-L⁴M², 49 leaves

Because the collation indicates the ideal copy of the book, and because the copy in front of us may be imperfect, we may have to look at several or even many other copies of the same book, before we can be sure of the collation. Thus the utility of descriptive bibliographies to the collector. The competent writer of a descriptive bibliography will have studied as many copies as possible of all of the books described, helping us to understand the makeup of each individual copy, when seen in isolation.

When first encountered, collational formulas can seem forbidding, but even with the basic information provided in this chapter, the following formula can be understood:

4°. [a]¹b-c⁴d²B-D⁴E⁴(±E⁴)F-2F⁴2G⁴(±2G4)2H⁴(±2H⁴)
2I-3P⁴3Q⁴(±3Q2)3R², 260 leaves

This is the collation of the 1713 edition of Newton's *Principia mathematica* (the entire E and 2H gatherings were canceled).

These are the major shorthand symbols used in constructing collational formulas, though there are other ones used under special circumstances. Readers who have become infatuated with the subject are referred to Fredson Bowers' *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton, 1949) for a much more detailed exposition of format and collation, with many examples. Although matters of format and collation can quickly

geous to the book collector. Determining collation gives us a much better picture of the way in which a book was printed, frequently enabling us to determine priority of editions, and providing us with clues about variant states and the reasons for them. Collectors prefer copies containing uncanceled leaves and all blanks; having the collation of a book before us allows us to center our attention on such matters efficiently.

The Publisher's Role

Behind the publication of most books is an *entrepreneur*—the person who assembles capital, secures a manuscript, and causes it to be printed, illustrated, assembled, bound, and distributed. During the earliest period of printed books, the entrepreneur was most often the printer himself, but by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the publisher's role became increasingly distinct as a trade separate from that of the printer.

The publisher acquired a manuscript and sent it off to be printed. Meanwhile, the publisher might decide to have the book illustrated and hire an artist to execute the illustrations, sending the resulting blocks or plates to be printed, perhaps to an entirely different shop than the one responsible for the *letterpress* or text of the book. While the printer deals with matters concerning the format and collation of a book, the publisher's concern is a broader one. Bibliographically speaking, the point is important, because the collational formula of a book deals solely *with the folding of the sheets of text and the leaves conjugate with them*. It does *not* take account of separately printed illustrations or maps or fold-out sheets tipped into the book in various places. In a complete bibliographical description of a book, the account of the illustrations is reserved for a section of its own that follows the collational formula. Separately printed illustrations may be inserted in any number, anywhere into a printed book, and we cannot tell from the collation of the printed sheets where they are to go, or how many there are to be.

The publisher will advertise the finished book and superintend its distribution to the retail bookseller (or librarian), so that the public may acquire copies. The publisher must also decide whether there is to be more than one issue of the book; perhaps one issue will be illustrated, another not. Furthermore, a decision must be made whether to market the book in various kinds of bindings, some more elaborate and expensive than

The Binder's Role

Again, the early nineteenth century is the great watershed. Before the end of the eighteenth century, the publisher stored most of his books in flat, unbound sheets. Retail booksellers bought their books in sheets and had only a few copies at a time bound up for sale in their shops. More elaborate bindings would be ordered individually by the customer to his or her own specifications: bound in calf or morocco, with or without gold tooling, and so forth. For the sake of convenience, the bookseller might provide books with their sheets folded and cheaply stitched into paper covers, or paper-covered boards. But these bindings were considered to be temporary, to be replaced with more permanent coverings after purchase. About 1,000 copies of the first Shakespeare folio of 1623 were printed; if we could reassemble them all, we would expect to find every one of them in a different binding.

With the introduction of cloth for bookbinding in the 1820s, publishers began to bind up much or all of an edition in identical fashion *before* releasing any copies to the retail book-sellers; cloth lends itself to *edition binding* (as this practice is called) in a way that leather skins, each one unique, do not. A cloth binding is usually less splendid than a leather one, and, especially in the earlier decades of edition binding, many book buyers replaced the original cloth bindings in which their books were purchased with more elaborate ones. Present-day collectors, of course, generally prefer the original binding (however temporary it was intended to be) to a later one (however splendid); and a Jane Austen novel in original boards is worth several times one that has been rebound magnificently in morocco. There are bibliographically sensible reasons for this preference, because we always want to get back as close as possible to the book as originally marketed. A later binding may be very beautiful, but the later binder may have trimmed the leaves, removed blank ones, replaced defective leaves or whole gatherings with substitutes from other copies (and possibly other editions), or otherwise tampered with the original.

Furthermore, later bindings may obliterate evidence of *provenance*, or previous ownership. We are always interested in knowing who owned a book, through evidence of bookplates or names in the end leaves—evidence that later owners (or their binders) may not have been concerned to preserve. For all these reasons, the magical words in the description of bookbindings

are *as originally issued*. Bear in mind, however, that these words make the most sense in the period after about 1770; before that time, the distribution of books to retail booksellers in sheets required individual, bespoke bindings.

For books produced during the handprinting period, collectors prefer *contemporary* bindings, that is, bindings executed soon after publication. Bindings tend not to be either signed or dated, but an expert can usually date them to within a couple of decades. There is no single, good, general introduction to the history of bookbinding where you can go to learn dating techniques, but one of the best places to start is with the Walters Art Gallery exhibition catalogue *The History of Bookbinding 525-1950* (Baltimore, 1957).

I have emphasized several times in this chapter that the vocabulary used in descriptive bibliography attempts to be precise, and that the cause of precision is not helped by the existence of both specialist and common definitions for the words we use in descriptive bibliography. The word *collation* is an example of such a word; it is properly used to describe the order of the printed and folded sheets of letterpress. But booksellers frequently use the phrase "collated and perfect" to mean that they have gone through a book page by page to ensure that all leaves are present in the right order and that all illustrations are also present. This phrase is sanctioned by long usage, and so long as we know what is being talked about, there is no harm done.

Serious-minded bibliographers occasionally issue injunctions against the slipshod use of their favorite words: issue, state, impression, edition, signature, gathering, and the rest. These Canute-like injunctions are to be taken seriously—but not too seriously; it depends upon one's audience. Still, a knowledge of the exact vocabulary of descriptive bibliography is a useful adjunct to the book collector's education, for the complete descriptions of printed books can necessarily become very elaborate, dealing with matters of type, paper, printing, illustration, and binding, as well as with the circumstances surrounding writing and publication. The better a book collector can interpret the vocabulary of descriptive bibliography, especially that which most concerns the periods of his or her interest, the better the quality of books likely to be bought, and the better the quality of the collections formed.