

Print

Introduction:

- Introduction of print in mid-15th century causes massive shift in European culture

Technology

- Johannes Gutenberg develops system of movable type and a printing press c. 1450 (not first press, developed in China by 11th century, Korea by 13th century)
- Set up of press still rather slow, but ability to run many copies speeds up book production
- With conscientious and careful printers, potential for creating cleaner editions via use of editors (potential for poorly done editions as well)
- Increase in production leads to decrease in cost, increased variability of cost (cheaper by using smaller letters, cheaper paper, cheaper ink, cheaper covers; more expensive with higher quality materials, larger letters, and inclusion of woodcuts or hand-drawn decorations)
- Books become affordable (to some extent) to artisans
- Production of cheap ephemeral print (pamphlets, broadsheets, single images) allow poorer people to access print
- BUT: does not replace manuscript tradition
 - manuscripts continue to be created for the elite (status symbol)
 - printers can also use illumination to make more expensive and beautiful books
 - introduction of woodcuts as the print alternative to illumination

Cultural and Intellectual Changes

- For the non-elite
 - Increased access to written material for more sectors of society
 - Increased literacy rates, particularly in urban areas
 - difficulty assessing literacy rates, as reading and writing not taught together
 - Custom of reading out loud lends easily to public reading (access for the illiterate)
 - Sharing economy of books (many people likely read books they never owned)
- For the elite
 - Access to more books, particularly throughout schooling
 - Alters teaching practices in schools/universities
- Protestant and Catholic Reformations
 - Luther and other reformers used print
 - Vernacular bibles
 - Pamphlets
 - Devotional/catechistic texts
 - Flugschriften
 - Difficult to judge impact of print clearly; people don't convert just because of a pamphlet, but print makes the new ideas much more accessible and widespread
 - Catholics slower to adopt print
 - See print as potential threat (vernacular bibles, heretical texts)
 - Produced forms for bureaucratic elements of Catholic Reform
 - Catechisms and devotional texts
- Scientific Revolution
 - Most of the ideas in development shared among scientists by correspondence rather than in print

- Print useful for spreading final ideas/results, new discoveries, or creating texts for educational purposes
- e.g. Galileo's Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems (1632) and Andreas Vesalius' On the Fabric of the Human Body (1543)
- Censorship
 - Secular censorship
 - Focused on texts that were treasonous or seditious
 - To get around it, authors had to smuggle texts to other countries/regions
 - Religious censorship
 - Existed in both Protestant and Catholic territories, but much more organised/institutional in Catholic world
 - Creation of Index of Prohibited Books (1559)
 - 3 parts: authors whose work cannot be published, topics that cannot be written about, and specific titles that were banned
 - Books could either be approved, banned, or expurgated (marked for editing and then approved)
 - Approved books receive an imprimatur, printers should not print/booksellers should not sell books without the stamp/privilege
 - Does not stop illegal books - many printers/booksellers willing to take the risk for the profits, lots of owners hid their illegal books
 - Many books smuggled out to be printed or in to be sold/read if they could not be printed locally

Conclusion

- Was print revolutionary?
- One of most important technological shifts of the early modern period
- Changed how people interacted with books, received information, gained education, shared ideas
- Creation of a new industry
- Involved in major cultural and intellectual shifts
- BUT: Is the change sufficient to constitute 'revolution'? What about those who don't have access? What about continuation of manuscript culture?