



The Scottish Book Trade 1500–1720

PRINT COMMERCE AND PRINT CONTROL
IN EARLY MODERN SCOTLAND

ALASTAIR J. MANN

THE SCOTTISH BOOK TRADE
1500-1720

'The fredome, libertie and previledge of prenting, homebringing, and selling of all suche bookis and volumis quhilkis ar allowit and nowise forbidden ... aught [to] be free to all His Majesties subjectis ... and not conferrit and gevin to ony one persone without the grite hurte and prejudice of the cuntrey, becaus every suche privat and plane fredome, libertie, and privilege is not onlie a monopolie of ane evill preparative and example, bot will gif occassioun to alter and raise, hicht, and change the pryces of all bookis and volumes at the appetite and discretioun of the persone and personis in whose favouris the said privilege salhappin to be conferrit; and for this effect the saidis Lordis ordanis the gift and privilege purchest be the said Andro Haint [from the king] to be stayed, and on nawise to be past nor exped.'*

* Decision of the Privy Council in 1614. This related to protests by a variety of book merchants against a monopoly granted to Andro Hart by King James VI. *Register of Privy Council*, i, 10, 827-8 and 252.

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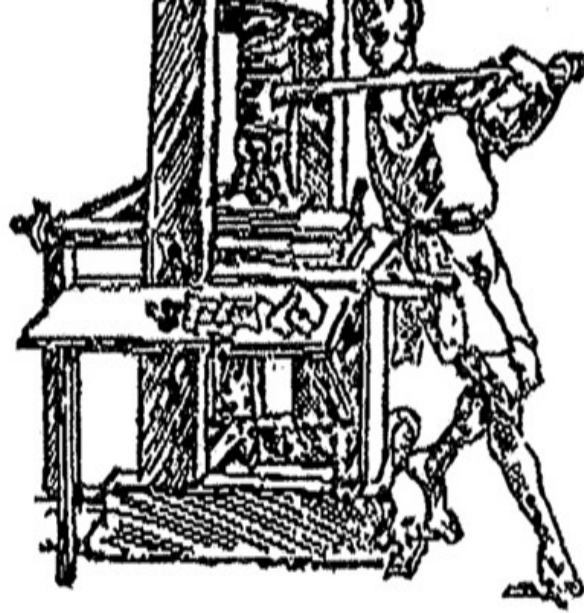
Print Commerce and Print Control
in Early Modern Scotland

*An historiographical survey of the
early modern book in Scotland*

by

Alastair F. Mann





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Abbreviations

Abbotsford: Abbotsford Club publications
ABR: Aberdeen burgh records, extracted printed volumes
APS: Acts of parliament, Scotland, printed series
Bannatyne: Bannatyne Club publications
EBR: Edinburgh burgh records, extracted printed series
EBS: Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions
GBR: Glasgow burgh records, extracted printed series
Grampian: Grampian Club publications
Maitland: Maitland Club publications
NLS: National Library of Scotland
RMS: Registers of the Great Seal (printed series)
RPC: Registers of the Privy Council (printed series)
RSS: Registers of the Privy Seal (printed series)
SHR: *Scottish Historical Review*
SHS: Scottish History Society publications
Spalding: Spalding Club publications
Spottiswoode: Spottiswoode Society
SRO: Scottish Record Office (now National Archives of Scotland)
SRS: Scottish Record Society publications
Stair: Stair Society
Wodrow: Wodrow Society publications

Notes

- ¹ Other contractions for titles, manuscript records and archives are indicated in the Bibliography and footnotes.
- ² Pounds 'scots' are used unless otherwise indicated.
- ³ A merle is two-thirds of a pound or 13s and 4d.

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Devices (85% size) of the early printers Walter Chepman (fl.1508-10), who partnered Andro Myllar, and Thomas Davidson, (fl.1532-42). Both devices follow the European style by depicting the tree of knowledge, though Davidson unconventionally shows two hairy men.

Introduction

'A Scottish Tradition'

Surveying the historiography of the early modern book in Scotland can be a frustrating activity. The published histories of the Continent of Europe and of Britain have been rarely impressed by the significance of the Scottish book trade. The respected English typographer Stanley Morison, in his *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, makes no reference to Scottish typography and printing until Ballantyne's edition of Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* printed in 1806. D. B. Updike, the American typographer, considers Scotland only worthy of a mention once the typefounder Alexander Wilson and the Foulis brothers of Glasgow began work in the mid-eighteenth century. Colin Clair in his very general *A History of European Printing* merely refers to those Scottish printers with English links, such as Vautrollier and Waldegrave, ignoring Davidson, Bassandyne, Finlason, Raban and Hart who, for differing reasons, have as justifiable a claim to our attention. The bibliographer A. F. Johnson, who otherwise has produced interesting essays on the Scottish book, lumps Scotland with those peripheral nations whose printing, 'although full of interest from the local point of view, was of no importance to the development of the book'. Johnson's co-author Margaret Bingham Stillwell, in her seventeenth-century survey, adds insult to injury by regarding Scotland as part of England and subject to Elizabethan printing restrictions, and by offering more references to printing in Carlisle than in Edinburgh! And even S. H. Steinberg in his seminal general history, *Five*

Hundred Years of Printing, spares no quarter when he emphasises that ‘Scotland had been almost the last of the civilised countries to see a printing press established within its frontiers’, even though Russia had no press until the 1550s, and most of Scandinavia barely pipped Scotland’s first press which began in the first decade of the sixteenth century.¹ This is no basis for the serious consideration of the Scottish book trade.

The history of the book trade in the British Isles has suffered from difficulties of balance where the research pull of London — home of the monolithic Stationers’ Company, that merchant corporation begun in the 1550s to restrict entry to the printing trade and control the right to copy — has simply been emphasised by the vast records that have survived for that very English corporation.² So, with the comparative and summative account of the book in Scotland and Edinburgh inadequately considered by much British and Continental book historiography we would expect impassioned and enthusiastic rejoinders from Scottish historians.

Scottish history has experienced a welcome and speedy renaissance since the 1950s, but the ‘new age’ of Scotland’s publishing and printing history has accelerated relatively slowly. It is no easy task to match the achievements and enthusiasm of the nineteenth-century bibliophiles who formed their Bannatyne, Maitland and Spalding clubs. Although many pamphlets and articles appeared before and after the 1950s, throughout the twentieth century Scottish book history has sometimes failed to raise itself above the observation of typographical minutiae, focusing on some rare printed relic, or the monograph approach to a specific library, university or book maker.³ Ironically, for the country that produced the first ‘history of printing’ emanating from the British Isles — James Watson’s *A History of the Art of Printing* (1713) — no

single detailed volume has been published on, say, the Scottish library through all its history, the history of the Scottish printing since its first appearance, the legislative framework in Scotland for copyright, patents and censorship, and the economic history of book manufacture in Scotland. Much of the best Scottish social and economic historiography since the Second World War has given little prominence to the Scottish book trade.⁴ Some cultural histories of the more 'artistic' variety, as well as political histories driven by events and transient political themes, important though they are, have failed to take account of the power of the press to breathe life into economic, cultural and political developments. The history of the book, in Scotland as elsewhere, may have the appearance of a specialist subject, but has relevance to all human thought and experience, especially since the advent of the press.

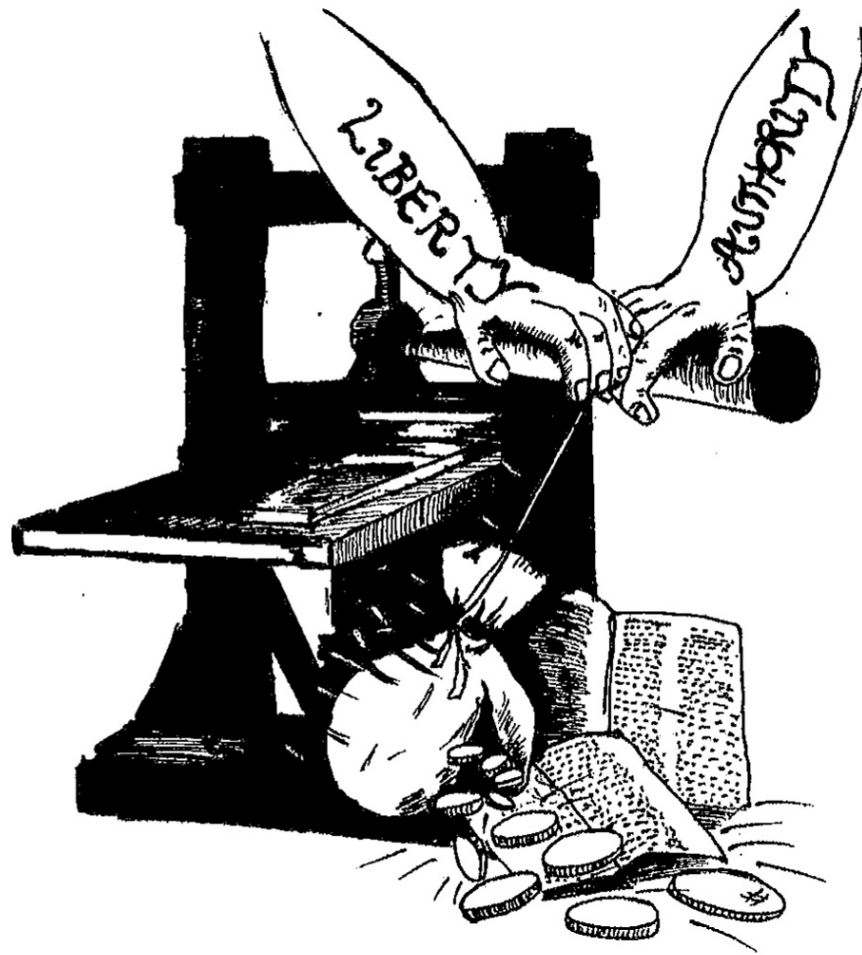
In spite of these disappointments there are a few vital bibliographical foundations of the Scottish book. Of the first rank are R. Dickson and J. P. Edmond's *Annals of Scottish Printing, 1507-1610* (1890), a book full of bibliography, extracted documents and correspondence, and typographical and collation details; J. Durkan and A. Ross *Early Scottish Libraries* (1961), with an excellent introduction by Ross and a remarkable list of pre-Reformation book owners and their libraries; Dr John Lee's *Memorial for the Bible Societies of Scotland* (1824), containing much useful detail, especially on the printing of scripture, and Harry G. Aldis's *List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1700* (1904, revised 1970). This last volume provides not only a catalogue of Scottish books, a database ready for analysis and dissection, but also a considerable amount of auxiliary detail through an extensive index and supplementary index, as well as biographical information on the booksellers, printers and

stationers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The following chapters would have been impossible without Aldis and a small band of bibliographical historians who have built upon his work. But also worthy of mention are some of the best supporting historical surveys: *The Glasgow University Press, 1638-1931* (1931) by James MacLehose, and *The Aberdeen Printers, 1620-1730* (1884) by J. P. Edmond, both of which provide detailed histories of printing outside Edinburgh, along with a large number of primary references and contemporary extracts, and lastly *A History of Scottish Bookbinding, 1432-1650* (1955) by William Smith Mitchell which, in spite of an expected narrow scope, delivers some novel analysis of the physical uniqueness of Scottish book production.⁵

More recently, there have been projects and publications large and small that have helped shed new light on the Scottish book, though much of the period from 1603 to 1707 has been relatively becalmed compared with the decades before and after. The series 'The History of the Book in Britain' (Cambridge University Press) has useful essays reflecting on Scottish readers and publishing, especially for the pre-Reformation period, and shows that not all English-based publishing is ignorant of the Scottish dimension. The eighteenth century is well served by bibliographical historians such as Warren McDougall. However, publication in the coming years of the new series 'The History of the Book in Scotland' (HOBS), due from Edinburgh University Press, looks to be the highlight of the next decade and will provide much-needed thematic surveys of the Scottish scene.⁶

In spite of the consolation of the above, much needs to be done to give the Scottish book trade the attention it deserves in the firmament of Scottish historiography. The following is intended to give the book trade from c.1500 to c.1720 a detailed examination looking at booksellers,

bookbinders, stationers and printers and their relationship to the forces of authority. As will be revealed in Chapter 7, the scale of the Scottish book trade in this period was surprisingly large, consisting of about 200 printers and 500 booksellers, but its rate of growth was not constant as it was buffeted by the winds of economic and political circumstance. The public rather than the private world of book dissemination will be examined, not the many personal and private book collections which adorned the libraries of the literate and landed. Emphasis will be placed more on supply than on demand. It will be seen that the unique qualities of the printed book, with its blend of commerce and technology on the one hand, and intellect and ideology on the other, ensured that authority — burghs, church, government (crown and executive)⁷ and law courts — provided a complex response of liberty and prohibition. Thus it was for all nations experiencing the arrival of printing but, as we shall see, Scotland had its own particular range of dynamics, a distinct Scottish tradition.



¹ Stanley Morison, *Four Centuries of Fine Printing* (London, 1960); D. B. Updike, *Printing Types: Their History, Formes and Use* (Cambridge, Mass, 1937); Colin Clair, *A History of European Printing* (London, 1976); A.F. Johnson, *Selected Essays on Books and Printing* (London, 1970); A.F. Johnson, 'The Sixteenth Century', in Lawrence Wroth (ed.), *A History of the Printed Book* (New York, 1938), 154; Margaret Bingham Stillwell, 'The Seventeenth Century', in Wroth, *The Printed Book*, 169; S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (London, 1974), 206.

² For Stationers' Company, see below, *passim*.

³ For example: Douglas Hamen, 'The Marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to the Dauphin: A Scottish Printed Fragment', *The Library*, 4 ser, xii (1931), or W. S. Mitchell, 'The Common Library of New Aberdeen', *Libri*, iv (1953-4).

⁴ Some brief discussion of the book trade is to be found in Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), 257-61 and R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1985), 163-5. For

a detailed survey, see Alastair J. Mann, 'The Book Trade and Public Policy in Early Modern Scotland, c.1500-c.1720' (PhD, Stirling, 1997). Watson's book, while useful for his preface on early Scottish printing, is largely a translation of Jean de la Caille's *Historie de L'imprimerie*.

- 5 R. Dickson & J. P. Edmond, *Annals of Scottish Printing: from the introduction of the art in 1507 to the beginning of the seventeenth century* (1890, reprinted 1975); John Durkan & Anthony Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (1961); Dr. John Lee, *Memorial for the Bible Societies in Scotland* (1824) and *Additional Memorial* (1826); Harry G. Aldis, *A List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1700: including those printed forth of the Realm for Scottish Booksellers* (1904, reprinted and updated 1970) [Aldis]; James MacLehose, *The Glasgow University Press, 1658-1931* (1931); J. P. Edmond, *The Aberdeen Printers, 1620 to 1736* (4 vols, 1884); William Smith Mitchell, *A History of Scottish Bookbinding, 1432-1650* (1955). For the major bibliographical dictionaries essential for the study of the British book trade, see Bibliography.
- 6 See L. Hellinga & J. B. Trapp (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, volume 3, 1400-1557 [History of the Book]* (Cambridge, 1999). S. R. J. Lyall, 'Books and Book Owners in Fifteenth-century Scotland', in J. Griffiths & D. Pearsall (eds), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475* (Cambridge, 1989), 239-56 and A. A. McDonalds 'Early Modern Scottish Literature and the Parameters of Culture', in S. Mapstone & J. Wood (eds), *The Rose and the Thistle: Essays on the Culture of Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (East Linton, 1998), 77-100 are mainly literary history. Warren McDougall has published a series of articles including 'Smugglers, Reprinters, and Hot Pursuers: The Irish-Scottish Book Trade, and Copyright Prosecutions in the Late Eighteenth Century', in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *The Stationers' Company and the Book Trade, 1550-1990* (Winchester and Delaware, 1997). Note also the forthcoming J. Barnard & M. Bell (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, volume 4, 1557-1695* (Cambridge, 2002).
- 7 The main executive organ of Scottish government in the early modern period was the Privy Council and its various committees.



Andrew Hart writes



Excudebat *Andreas Hart* bibliopola

A montage of the printing devices and signature of the Edinburgh printer, bookseller and publisher, Andro Hart. Hart became the wealthiest Scottish book trader before the Restoration. In particular he was a major book importer.

CHAPTER ONE

Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow: The Book and the Burghs

Employers and Employees

The arrival in Scotland of the printed book and the printing press represented a new dawn of opportunity. With opportunity came responsibility and potential dangers. Yet given the gradual maturity of the early modern Scottish burghs in the commercial, political and social spheres, we would expect to find the burgh councils and magistrates engaged with the printed media with some confidence, and with an appreciation of the possibilities. The development of printing was secured for the good of the community, but community good could be served just as easily by book burning as by book manufacture.

The existing historiography of early modern printing in Scotland confirms the involvement of the Scottish burghs in book trade and culture, and especially in the three main centres of printing: Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow.¹ Directly, through acting as employer, censor, licensor, patron and publisher, and indirectly, as a 'sustainer' of schools and libraries, the councillors and magistrates of these burghs regulated and encouraged book commerce and book ownership. Although burgh concern over the printed book predated the advent of printing in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow, the point at which these burghs became the employers of book makers marked a watershed and, therefore, it is appropriate firstly to consider their role as employers.

The arrival of printing in these burghs depended on the initiative of groups and not single individuals. Scotland's first press, Walter Chepman and Andro Myllar's Edinburgh press of 1507-10, came about by a combination of Chepman's merchant wealth and connections at court, the preparedness of Myllar to travel to Rouen and learn the art of printing, the influence of Bishop William Elphinstone, whose *Breviarium Aberdonense* of 1510 was the press's *magnum opus*, and James IV's willingness to encourage and provide patents for the venture. The surviving records of Edinburgh town council suggest no particular involvement by the burgh, although it must surely have lent moral support and protection.²

The attitude of Edinburgh town council changed dramatically from the 1560s. The first patently 'official' record of the burgh as a print employer was not until Gideon Lithgow's appointment as college printer in July 1648,³ although there is plenty of earlier evidence of council concern for printing. The council developed a role as employer and facilitator. An example of this was in 1579 when it agreed to waive the rent of the printer and bookseller Thomas Bassandyne who held property at the Netherbow.⁴

The key to Edinburgh burgh involvement as employer was the close relationship between the university college and town from the 1580s. Many aspects, from the state of college buildings to the student curriculum, were of concern to the council, and the retention of a college printer was also seen as vitally important. Sometimes the college printer was also the royal printer, as were Robert Charteris (1603-8), Thomas Finlason (1612-15), and Andrew Anderson and his heirs after 1663, but more often the greater number of presses in Edinburgh made it possible for the town to look elsewhere.⁵ Thus Henry Charteris in the 1590s, Andro Hart and his heirs from

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