



SHORT-TITLE CATALOGS: THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

John Bloomberg-Rissman

The output of the Anglophone press is covered by a series of projects, loosely known as short title catalogs. The major projects include:

- *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640* (STC)
- *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries 1641–1700* (Wing)
- The English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)
- The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (NSTC)
- The North American Imprints Program (NAIP)

There are other short title catalog projects, such as the *Cathedral Libraries Catalogue* and *English Catholic Books, 1701–1800* to name but two. Though these projects, and others like them, are arguably as worthy of discussion as any, it is not incorrect to see them as extensions of or supplements to the projects listed above. Volume 1 of the *Cathedral Libraries Catalogue* is in essence an extension of the canvass undertaken for STC and Wing, while volume 2 concerns itself with continental printing, and is therefore irrelevant in this context. *English Catholic Books, 1701–1800* is, in its own words, “a useful adjunct to the ESTC.”¹ This paper will limit itself then to discussion of the bulleted projects, and will include up-to-date information on the status of each.

The precursor to the first true short title catalog in the Anglophone world is usually considered to be the three-volume *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the British Museum Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Books in English Printed*

John Bloomberg-Rissman is Assistant Director for English projects (ESTC), Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research at the University of California, Riverside

Abroad, to the Year 1640 (Trustees of the British Museum, 1884). Its editor, George Bullen (keeper of the Department of Printed Books), organized it alphabetically, "according to authors' names, the Museum system being followed for anonymous and pseudonymous works; for books published under initials; for Bibles, Liturgies and other works of a special character."² The printed short title catalogs that were to follow were organized in much the same manner. But this work differed from them in one important respect: it recorded the holdings of only one institution.

Over the next quarter century, the possibility of building upon Bullen's work and creating "a short-title handlist' of extant English books of the sixteenth century"³ was, in certain circles, a recurring topic of conversation. At the January 21, 1918, meeting of the Bibliographical Society, the topic arose again. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave explain:

The flag waved on this occasion had been displayed fairly often during the third of a century which had elapsed since 1884 when the three-volume *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the British Museum Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Books in English Printed Abroad, to the Year 1640*, had been issued by the trustees of the Museum. But the works published in the interim had made waving this flag much more dangerous. The project was by 1918 a possible one, and the Vice-President who happened to be in the Chair was sufficiently convinced by the facts and figures which the Secretary had produced to offer his collaboration in the editing and to provide the funds which had been indicated as necessary to secure a minimum of paid help. What the Secretary thought when he received this offer is his own secret.⁴

Though the title page is dated 1926, it was in January 1927 that Pollard and Redgrave published *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, the fruits of the 1918 meeting.⁵ This publication has become famous as STC. Unlike Bullen's catalog, which records the holdings of one institution, STC records holdings from the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, the Cambridge University Library, the Huntington Library, and 149 other institutional and private collections.

Twenty years later the Bibliographical Society reprinted STC in order to stave off an American piracy. That someone would consider pirating a work of bibliography is one proof that STC was, in the words of F. C. Francis, "one of the most significant books ever published for the study of English literature up to the year 1640."⁶ Readers of that sentence must construe "literature" in its widest sense.

In the same place, Francis laments that the Society was positioned to issue only a reprint, rather than a new edition. Over many years, however, a second edition did take shape. The second volume of the "second edition, revised and enlarged begun by W. A. Jackson & F. S. Ferguson completed by Katharine F. Pantzer,"

appeared first in 1976. The first volume was published in 1986. A third, index volume was issued in 1991. It was pleasant to see Pantzer honored at the January 1998 meeting of the Bibliographical Society of America.

Leaving aside the index volume, itself an impressive achievement, the magnitude of the second edition far exceeds that of the first. According to its preface, "the original 609 double-column pages have now become, including addenda and corrigenda, 1114."⁷ The number of collections consulted had swelled, as well. What was a one-page list in 1926 is now a list five pages long.

The publication of the index volume signaled the completion of STC. But the fact that the project was complete was not passed on to contributing institutions. Some institutions, including the Bodleian and Huntington libraries, continue to report new acquisitions, deaccessions, and emendations to what used to be Pantzer's Harvard address. I have attempted to discover the fate of reports sent since 1991, but I have been unsuccessful. This "neither a bang nor a whimper" *denouement* is clearly unsatisfactory.

The Bibliographical Society, holder of the STC copyright, aware that "there ought to be a mechanism for reporting addenda to STC,"⁸ recently addressed the issue. At its June 2, 1998, meeting the Society proposed offering the ESTC the assignment of continuing responsibility for the maintenance of STC. In November 1998, at the ESTC International Committee meeting, the Bibliographical Society proposed that ESTC take the responsibility for new addenda and corrigenda on a three-year trial basis.

Though STC increased greatly in size, its temporal scope remained the same. Students of English history will recognize that there was a good reason that Bullen, Pollard, and Redgrave decided to stop with 1640. Until that date, the government was able to exert reasonably effective control over the output of the press. This had the effect (though not the purpose, which was, of course, censorship) of limiting the number of items that were printed. But the 1640s saw the outbreak of hostilities throughout the British Isles, and long before Charles I lost his head, he lost control of the press.

A veritable deluge of printed matter flooded the country. During the 1640s alone, over 14,000 monographs were published. Compare this with the approximately 35,000 entries (monographic *and* serial) that comprise the entire STC. These early short title catalog pioneers felt that a bibliography of the output of the later seventeenth-century press would have to wait for other hands.

Those hands belonged to Donald Wing. A librarian at Yale, Wing was faced with the task of resettling the university's various collections of early English books into the new Sterling Memorial Library. In addition, he had to integrate into this material the 1933 acquisition of Falconer Madan's collection of seventeenth-century books printed at Oxford. Since he had no bibliographic tool for the post-1640 period equivalent to the Pollard and Redgrave *Short-Title Catalogue, 1475-1640*, he began to fashion one.⁹

Twenty years later, the first volume of Wing's *Short-Title Catalog of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries 1641-1700* (or, eponymously, "Wing") appeared, published by the Index Society. The first edition was completed in three volumes between 1945 and 1951. In 1963, responsibility for further publication was turned over to the Modern Language Association (MLA).

A second edition of volume 1, edited by Wing, appeared in 1972. Second editions of volumes 2 and 3 were published in 1982 and 1988, respectively. Volume 2 was revised and edited by Timothy M. Crist with the assistance of Janice M. Hansel, Phebe A Kirkham, Jeri S. Smith, and others. Volume 3 was prepared by John J. Morrison, Editor, Carolyn W. Nelson, Assistant Editor, with the assistance of Matthew Seccombe, Mark E. English, and Harold E. Selesky. A second edition, newly revised and enlarged of volume 1, appeared in 1994. Its team of editors consisted of John J. Morrison and Carolyn W. Nelson, Editors, and Matthew Seccombe, Assistant Editor.¹⁰ An index volume is scheduled to appear in the near future.

A CD-ROM version of Wing containing emendations and additional information was issued in 1996 by Chadwyck-Healey. According to its introductory matter, "This revised edition of Wing expands the 1972 edition with the restoration of lost entries, expansion of cross-references, and the addition of new material. The CD-ROM gives unprecedented access to over 100,000 entries."¹¹ Selected holdings of nearly 850 collections are represented.

At the January 1998 meeting of the International Committee of the ESTC, Phyllis Franklin, representing MLA, copyright holder of Wing, reported that with the publication of the CD-ROM and the printed index volume work on Wing would cease. Nevertheless, as with STC, contributors have never been told to discontinue submitting reports. Luckily, Morrison, on an apparently volunteer basis, continues to process them and keeps Wing up to date. It is hoped that he can find a venue in which to publish this supplementary information on, say, an annual basis.

Wing set his terminal date at 1700. His reasons were as valid as his predecessors' when they chose 1640 as theirs. If one likens the increase in the output of the press in the 1640s to a dynamite explosion, then the increase that followed the expiration of licensing regulations in the 1690s, the rise of the middle class, increased literacy, and other factors would have to be described as a nuclear blast. Because of the incredible increase in the number of publications, scholars and bibliographers long felt that an eighteenth-century short title catalog was a logistical impossibility.

Until the invention of the computer, that is. This new technology created new possibilities. The pilot project for a national union catalog of the hand press in England and its dependencies to 1800 was completed in 1974 through Project LOC, a feasibility study for a union catalog of the holdings of the university and college libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, and the British Library. In 1976, conferences spon-

sored by the British Library and the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in London and Washington, D.C., resulted in a resolution to undertake a union catalog of eighteenth-century monographic imprints that would extend STC and Wing. The product of that resolution was the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC).

The ESTC had been conceived from its origins as a collaborative project, a joint Anglo-American effort. The British Library office accepted responsibility for entering British and European collections while North American repositories became the responsibility of Professor Henry L. Snyder (then at the University of Kansas, later at LSU and the University of California, Riverside). The American Antiquarian Society agreed to take charge of North American imprints, wherever they were held (see below for more on the North American Imprints Program). But the cooperative nature of the project did not stop with the three editorial centers. Just as STC and Wing include the holdings of many institutions, nearly 2,000 institutions worldwide have reported, and continue to report, their relevant holdings to the ESTC.

The computer not only made it possible to gather and organize large amounts of data, it also made it possible to retrieve that data in heretofore undreamed of ways. As mentioned above, STC and Wing were organized for the most part in an alphabetical sequence. Such a sequence does not readily lend itself to answering questions such as, "How many sermons were printed in Oxford during the 1630s?" But computer databases readily yield answers to such questions. Therefore, in 1987 the International Committee for the ESTC studied the prospects for a catalog of the whole hand press era. It determined that not only was it attainable, but that, indeed, a substantial number of the components for it were already in existence. As a result, the ESTC's scope expanded backward in time to the introduction of printing into the British Isles. The acronym was kept, with "English" conveniently replacing "Eighteenth" for the new project name, the English Short Title Catalogue.

Presently, the ESTC includes about 27,000 records representing items with pre-1641 imprints; nearly 70,000 representing items dated 1641–1700; and about 325,000 for items with eighteenth-century imprints. Soon, with the permission of the copyright holders, the ESTC will add all of the locations recorded in STC and Wing to its records, and will add the STC and Wing records themselves for items not yet cataloged. These relatively brief records will be replaced by fuller bibliographical descriptions as the ESTC offices continue their labors.

For the period 1641–1700, bibliographic control is provided by Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe, *British Newspapers and Periodicals 1641-1700* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1987). In 1994 the ESTC decided to include serials. As of this writing, the ESTC's Early English Serials staff has created approximately one-third of the estimated 5,500 serials records that will be needed to complete coverage.

The ESTC is available via the Research Libraries Group's Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), the British Library's BLAISE-Line, and on CD-ROM.

Printing did not cease, of course, in 1800. The Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (NSTC) "aims to provide increasingly complete listings of British books printed between 1801 and 1919."¹² "Increasingly complete" because the NSTC is, as is the ESTC, a work in progress. The NSTC "was established under the chairmanship of John Jolliffe on the 20th May 1983."¹³ It is being compiled from catalogs of the following institutions: the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, Trinity College (Dublin) Library, National Library of Scotland, Harvard University Library, The British Library, University Library (Newcastle), and the Library of Congress.

If one were to continue the string of images comparing the increase in the number of publications during the 1640s and late 1690s with explosions, then perhaps an appropriate image for the number of publications encompassed by the scope of the NSTC might be a star going nova. According to NSTC estimates, nearly 1.5 million items will be included in their catalog when they complete their work. Therefore they have divided the time period into three series. Series I covers the years 1801–1815; Series II covers 1816–1870; and Series III carries the catalog through 1918.

Publication began in 1984 with a volume covering Series I Phase I A-C. In 1986 the sixth and final volume of Series I, the title index volume, was published. The same year saw the issue of the first of the 56 volumes that comprise Series II. In 1996 Series I and II were issued together on a CD-ROM. This CD-ROM includes 663,000 records. Series III, currently in progress, will not be issued in print volumes, but only in electronic formats. A series of fourteen CD-ROMs will be issued semiannually, concluding in 2002. Each issue will replace and enhance those previously released, and will carry the work forward. As of this writing, the latest (fourth issue: May 1998) CD-ROM covers main entries A-C.

The NSTC is published by Gwen Averley and Frank Robinson (Avero Publications, Newcastle upon Tyne), and is distributed by ABC-Clio.

NSTC includes North American imprints. In some respects, then, there is a bit of overlap between it and the American Antiquarian Society's North American Imprints Program (NAIP), which "has as its long-term goal the creation of a highly detailed, machine-readable union catalog of books, pamphlets, and broadsides printed through 1876 in the United States and Canada."¹⁴ In another sense, there is no overlap. NSTC is a true short title catalog (as are STC and Wing), and includes just enough description to distinguish one item from another. NAIP records, on the other hand, are, as noted above, "highly detailed." (The ESTC falls somewhere between the two camps. Records for items with eighteenth-century imprints are built more or less along the lines of short title catalog records; records for items with earlier imprints resemble those created for NAIP.)

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century components of NAIP are essentially complete, and consist of more than 41,000 records. Work continues on items with post-1801 imprints, in discrete intellectually sensible segments. Broad-sides (through 1859), children's books (1821–1876), and U.S. imprints (1821–1830) have all been cataloged. As of this writing, the staff is working on broadsides (through 1869), almanacs (1831–1850), and all collections (1831–1840). "While the pre-1801 segment of the catalog is a true union catalog, recording the holdings of hundreds of libraries, the nineteenth-century segment will remain, for the time being, a catalog of the holdings of the American Antiquarian Society. . . . The enormous task of recording the nineteenth-century holdings of other libraries will be deferred until libraries are able to contribute, and the Program is able to accept, machine-readable reports of holdings."¹⁵

NAIP records are accessible in several ways. Since 1992, they have been available via the AAS's online catalog. As mentioned above, when the ESTC project began, responsibility for North American imprints was turned over to the AAS. Therefore, NAIP records that fall within the scope of the ESTC have been imported into that file.

Individually, each project described above is a splendid achievement. But, when they are considered collectively, "splendid" is much too poor a word. When complete, these short title catalogs will provide control of and access to virtually the entire output of the press of the Anglophone world. Some day, scholars may call the twentieth century (among other things) the golden age of bibliography. If that comes to pass, these projects will not be the least reason.

Notes

1. F. Blom, J. Blom, F. Korsten, G. Scott, eds., *English Catholic Books 1701–1800: A Bibliography* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. x.

2. George Bullen, *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the British Museum Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Books in English Printed Abroad, to the Year 1640* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1884), introductory note.

3. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1926), p. v.

4. Pollard and Redgrave, introduction.

5. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, 2nd ed. rev. and enl. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986–91), v. 1, p. vii.

6. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1946), p. v.

7. Jackson, Ferguson, and Pantzer, v. 1, p. ix.

8. Private communication to the author, March 15, 1998.

9. John J. Morrison and Carolyn W. Nelson, eds., and Matthew Seccombe, asst. ed., *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries 1641–1700*, 2nd ed. newly rev. and enl. (New York: Modern Language Association, 1994), v. 1, p. v.

10. Information about editorial teams is taken from the title pages of the various volumes.

11. *Wing Short-Title Catalogue 1641–1700 on CD-ROM* (Alexandria, Va: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996); User manual, p. 1–1.

12. *Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue, Ser. I & II* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Averro Publications, 1996); CD-ROM, Introduction to Help.

13. *Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue, Series I Phase I, 1801–1815, A-C* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Averro Publications, 1984), p. iv.

14. *North American Imprints Program Fact Sheet—May 1998* (gopher://mark.mwa.org:70/0catdesctexts.dir/naipfact.text).

15. *North American Imprints Program Fact Sheet*.