

The Present and Future of Incunable Cataloguing, II

by

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A Catalogue of Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century Now in the Bodleian Library.
By ALAN COATES, KRISTIAN JENSEN, CRISTINA DONDI, BETTINA WAGNER, and HELEN
DIXON, with the assistance of CAROLINNE WHITE and ELIZABETH MATHEW.
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COPIES OF MORE THAN 5,600 PRINTED EDITIONS from the fifteenth century are described here in a way that such books have rarely been described. The Bodleian Library's extensive collection of incunabula contains copies of nearly one fifth of the known editions, a proportion large enough for this catalogue to represent a historic advance in our approach to early printed books. Its method is new and its publication an occasion for some reflection on the future of cataloguing incunabula.

The definition of this category as books printed before the end of the fifteenth century is arbitrary. Framed by Mallinckrodt in 1639, the definition hardened when such books became eminently collectable, but neither Aldus Manutius nor Wynkyn de Worde would have recognized it. A particular historical interest attaches to the first generations of printing, and a fixed term has the practical convenience of limiting the corpus of books, but bibliographical categories could be defined more specifically. One specific factor is the outward anonymity of many incunabula. The first incunabula, like most manuscripts, had no title-page and no imprint, but, unlike manuscripts, they were not unique: each copy from a particular edition was fundamentally the same as every other. The bibliographical challenge was to establish which copies belonged to the same edition and to work out where, by whom, and when it was printed. This immense and difficult task was put on a secure footing in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Older anonymity can still be a source of great frustration when one uses literary scholarship that predates, or does not make proper use of, the bibliographical

reference literature. The gradual emergence of title-pages and imprints meant that well before the end of the century it was already much easier to identify a book and to see that two copies belonged to the same edition. Books printed in 1501 and after sometimes present the same superficial anonymity as books printed in 1460, and in such cases they need, and have sometimes received, similar treatment. But fifteenth-century books with title-pages and imprints showing printer and place of printing and date are as identifiable as they would be in the sixteenth century or later. It is historical interest rather than bibliographical difficulty that allows them to remain in the category of incunabula.

The cataloguing practice for incunabula was focused primarily on editions, and its terms of reference were related to the bibliography of printed books from the sixteenth century and after. The literary habit of listing editions primarily by author and title, with a subordinate arrangement by place of printing, printer, and date, was established by the seventeenth century and survives to this day. Georg Wolfgang Panzer inverted the data, giving priority to place of printing and date, a practice that Henry Bradshaw and Robert Proctor developed into the modern bibliographical arrangement by country, place, and printer, thereby bringing together the typographical data that had to be compared if editions were to be correctly distinguished. In catalogues neither arrangement has proved at all satisfactory as an approach to the works printed. The Bodleian catalogue was, we learn from the introduction, destined to follow the alphabetical arrangement, because the head of catalogues, John Jolliffe, thought 'that Proctor order is an idea that has outlived its usefulness and also not entirely appropriate to a collection as "small" as Bodley's' (J. W. Jolliffe to D. M. Rogers, 19 September 1984; quoted, p. lxxii). Kristian Jensen was appointed to succeed David Rogers in 1985. When he took on the task of producing a catalogue, and set about raising the funds that made it possible, the distinctive aspect of the approach adopted for this catalogue was:

to provide descriptions to the same standard expected for medieval manuscripts. In particular there would be a more detailed analysis of the contents of each book, which would identify all the works in a given volume [...]; there would also be detailed descriptions of bindings, decoration, and provenances [...]. The new catalogue would not aim to replicate typographical information already available in one or other of the detailed incunable catalogues. (p. lxxii)

The comparison with the cataloguing of medieval manuscripts is not inappropriate. In spite of the understandable tendency to see incunabula as the infancy of the new technology, printed books in their first generation or two were in many ways skeuomorphs of manuscripts. Here, indeed, we find Bodl. MS Lat. th.e.23, in which an edition of five Augustinian sermons, [Speyer, c. 1472] (GW 2956; Bod-Inc A-577), is continued with nine other works in manuscript, written in 1473. Jensen adopted a deliberate policy of

investigating the books as the product of their time, the result of a collaboration between intellectual and commercial interests. The works printed, from whatever age, and contemporary writers, editors, and patrons, all deserved to command as much attention as the printers who made the books. The cataloguing of medieval manuscripts has always put contents first; date and evidence for place of origin and provenance come next in importance; details of how the manuscript is made, such as collation, quire-signatures, pricking, and ruling, are generally included in modern catalogues, but they were not a priority in early modern descriptions, where a simple division by size into folios, quartos, and octavos would often substitute, irrespective of whether the material was paper or parchment. More or less attention has been given to binding and decoration, depending on the interests both of the manuscript and of the catalogue. The twentieth century saw a great increase in the sophistication of codicology, unmatched by any increased sophistication in cataloguers' understanding of what manuscripts can tell us about the works they contain. None the less, works still have priority in catalogues of manuscripts, though it has been rare for any catalogue to be arranged in author-order. There has never been a sense that literary and bibliographical descriptions might or could keep separate lives, and the arrangement of manuscript catalogues is rarely governed by any strict principle except the press-mark or other means of reference. Incunabula can be properly treated as a category between medieval manuscripts and later printed books, and we may judge whether this catalogue has found a method that will serve this purpose.

Like manuscript catalogues, the Bodleian catalogue of incunabula has focused on identification of works contained and on description of individual copies. Unlike medieval manuscripts, however, incunabula are not unique. Copies belong to editions. But whether in manuscript or incunable, works — in most though not all cases — have a life independent of editions and copies. My own perspective is that of a student of texts, and I have been all too conscious of a truth uttered by Paul Needham, who in 2001 referred to 'what all incunable catalogues should provide, but none, so far, do: a complete list of the textual items contained in the incunables'.¹ The same critic has already revised his statement: 'The groundbreaking feature of Bod-Inc is its thorough identification of texts: it is the first incunable catalogue to have taken on this central task', and he gives the credit to Jensen.² 'In essence, Bod-Inc becomes the closest thing we possess to a dictionary of incunable authors and texts', confined, of course, to those represented in the holdings of the Bodleian. Catalogues of medieval manuscripts may be thought to stand alone, because each manuscript is unique; of course the

¹ Paul Needham, 'Copy Description in Incunable Catalogues', *PBSA*, 95 (2001), 173–239 (p. 211).

² Paul Needham, 'The Bodleian Library Incunables', *PBSA*, 101 (2007), 345–95 (p. 361).

seeker after texts must work through the indexes of hundreds of such catalogues. Different catalogues of incunabula cannot treat the same edition independently, and they are likely to work together in more than just the bibliographical particulars.

In the past twenty years some important strides have made a huge difference to our knowledge of what survives from the printing presses of fifteenth-century Europe. Vera Sack's three-volume catalogue of incunabula in Freiburg presented a high standard of copy-description.³ The large-scale descriptive catalogue of incunabula in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (CIBN), which began to appear in 1985 and now lacks only the letters E–G, and that of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (BSB-Ink), which started to come out in 1988 and was complete by 2005 apart from an index, provide descriptions of some 7,100 and 9,600 editions respectively. The *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Museum* (BMC), which began publication in 1908, has been finished with volumes 12 (1985), 13 (2004), and, at last, 11 (2007), the most complete collection of English printing, reviewed in this issue of *The Library*. Altogether BMC provides descriptions of some 10,500 editions. The *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (GW) aims beyond any individual collection at completeness of coverage and exactness of bibliographical description, with every surviving incunable duly assigned to its edition. Seven volumes appeared between 1925 and 1938, but the first fascicule of volume 8 (1940) was left an orphan of war; work on the task resumed in the 1960s, and coverage has raced forwards from Eike von Repgow to *Horae* in the last forty years; in 2007 the catalogue has reached GW 13297.

For the rest of the alphabet, those of us more interested in works than in particular editions or in individual copies were left with recourse principally to Goff, which provides brief entries for almost 13,000 editions.⁴ In the 1990s, however, the Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue (ISTC) became available by degrees with public releases first on CD-ROM in 1996 and 1998 and now on the web. Here was a database that achieved — as near as one could expect — complete coverage, yet without any of the descriptive features one might look for in a catalogue. For those concerned with works, the entry of authors and works is incomplete and erratic in various ways. It placed considerable reliance on Goff and its precursors, which never attempted to be more than perfunctory in identifying the works that made up the content of a book. For those concerned with particular editions, the typographical and other physical information in ISTC is limited but has the merit of attempting always to be up to date. For those concerned with features specific to

³ Vera Sack, *Die Inkunabeln der Universitätsbibliothek und anderer öffentlicher Sammlungen in Freiburg im Breisgau und Umgebung* (Wiesbaden, 1985).

⁴ Frederick R. Goff, *Incunabula in American Libraries: A Third Census* (New York, 1964; repr. with additions, 1973).

individual copies, ISTC notes only those features that advance our knowledge of the edition represented.

In this situation, the way catalogues of incunabula should best be used is complex, and some initiation is needed. For information on collections and on features specific to individual copies, high-quality collection catalogues remain necessary. For particulars about editions, one needs to make oneself familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the many existing catalogues of different compass. Someone concerned with the work of particular printers may be best served by one catalogue above all others. This is the great utility of ISTC. Provided that you start with information that allows you to find the work — this is not always straightforward — or the particular edition, ISTC will lead you to bibliographical references for all the available catalogues. At this point it is the user's responsibility to know which is the most appropriate. Each edition in a sense is now identified by a string of catalogue references that help one to join up less complete or distinctive modes of reference. One often searches in vain for clear information about the work or works contained.

Against this background, what are the strengths of the new Bodleian catalogue? In brief they are the recording of evidence from individual copies, the listing of the entire contents of each edition with some orientation to identify the works, and the indexing of persons involved in the making and transmission of the books.

As a collection catalogue, it serves its local purpose superbly. Each copy described can be fitted into the history of accessions, surveyed by Alan Coates in the introduction. The total number of copies is reportedly more than 6,700, though the tally is complicated by including fragments. This catalogue has paid particular attention to information about the history of individual copies, using both internal and external evidence. By external evidence, I mean the records kept by the Bodleian over the four hundred years of its existence, which have often (though not invariably) allowed the cataloguers to say when a book was acquired, from where it was acquired, and even at what price. Internal evidence of provenance has been recorded in detail; everything in a book that can be interpreted as bearing on its history is recorded. This aspect of the catalogue has received unstinting praise from an expert on provenance.⁵ The 300-column 'Index of Provenances, Owners, Donors, and Other Names' (pp. 2833–2935) is therefore a key to a considerable range of information.⁶ Much of it, of course, relates principally to the history of this collection, but much of it can also be integrated

⁵ Needham, 'Bodleian Incunables', pp. 350, 356.

⁶ I note that this index fails to record N. R. Ker's brief ownership of N-054, which Ker appears to have bought in the saleroom in July and sold to the Friends of the Bodleian three months later. Is this the only such omission?

with information of the same kind in books now in other collections. We are a long way from seriously attempting to integrate the fruits of provenance research, but it is good that so much data is recorded and indexed. The names of major book-collectors or libraries through which these books have passed will very likely be the most used. But an index of names can only go so far. There is much information in the descriptions that will be recovered only with painstaking effort. Librarians have been known to sigh when researchers think they have themselves made a discovery simply by reading the catalogue, but there is much here to discover. I mention only a few that are already well known. Bodl. Auct. L.3.6 is a copy of the edition of Cicero, *De officiis*, [Mainz]: Johann Fust & Peter Schoeffer, 1465 (GW 6921; Bod-Inc C-307), with a sixteenth-century note on Fust and his connection with Gutenberg, whose rear endleaf is a manuscript fragment of the ninth century with fifty lines from Book IX of the *Aeneid*. Bodl. Auct. R.sup.1 is a copy of Bersuire's French Livy, Paris: [Antoine Caillaut & Jean Du Pré], 27 November 1486 (Bod-Inc L-126), on whose front endleaves are trade-records of books received from two sources, c. 1480–83, by the Oxford bookseller Thomas Hunt. Bodl. Auct. 1Q 3.7 (1) is a copy of Johannes Trithemius, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, Basel: Johann Amerbach, 1494 (Bod-Inc T-249), in which a contemporary German hand has entered shelfmarks, so that the reader could swiftly find copies in the library — but the actual provenance remains to be worked out. An *index rerum notabiliorum* would have helped users to find other treasures. The evidence, often anonymous, amorphous, sprawling, that shows early ownership in different places and different countries is important for assessing the trade in books and therefore the circulation of different works. There is much of that here, in an international collection of enormous range, which will provide fruitful study for the future.

When we turn to think about the works that were printed in the fifteenth century, the Bodleian catalogue really breaks new ground on a grand scale. Most incunabulists have shown surprisingly little interest in the works printed. It is difficult territory, in part because the works brought into print date from many different periods, classical, patristic, medieval, and Renaissance; in part because the bibliographical data of very many works have not been well explored.⁷ The early printed tradition is instructive in relating the manuscript tradition to that of later editions that continued in use until textual scholarship set about improving the foundations, and in approaching the intellectual impact of printing one must attempt to understand what it did for the texts of authors and works from the back-list as well as for the distribution of new works. Here I should pause to add a term to the repertory

⁷ This is a subject I treated in *Titulus: Identifying Medieval Latin Texts* (Turnhout, 2003).

in use. Needham has helpfully defined as terms for the discussion of incunabula, ‘copy’, ‘edition’, and ‘work’,⁸ though he allowed himself to use the word ‘text’ as synonymous with ‘work’, and I have done so too. It may be hopeless to define an everyday word as a term, but if it could be done, ‘text’ would mean the verbal form a work has in a particular manuscript or edition. A work may take many textual forms in different manuscript copies and printed editions; these individual textual forms are likely to contain a mixture of idiosyncratic and inherited variation that allows one, by making textual comparisons, to trace the textual history of the work. The transition from manuscript to print is an interesting stage in the history of a text, and those who read their ancient, patristic, and medieval works with an eye on the textual history ought to be better able to approach the evidence of incunabula. E. Ph. Goldschmidt lamented the lack of common understanding in his *Medieval Texts and their First Appearance in Print* (London, 1943). It continues. A remarkable find by one textual scholar was Mary Fuertes Boynton’s discovery in 1941 that Simon Alcock’s *De modo diuidendi thema pro materia sermonis dilatanda* had been printed, Cologne: Bartholomaeus de Unkel, 1476 (GW 11716), fols [115]^v–[122]^r, without heading or other division but following immediately on from the work of Iacobus de Fusignano as part of an edition of Guido de Monte Rochen’s *Manipulus curatorum*.⁹ Boynton cited the edition — as one would with a manuscript — merely by the press-marks in Paris, not yet visible in ISTC because CIBN has not reached G; in 1994 GW did not identify this work as part of the contents of the edition.

In dealing with works, there are many issues that demand consideration. First, how far is it necessary to go in transcribing the textual incipit from the edition described? It is good practice in medieval manuscript catalogues, but here it would add bulk to an already large catalogue. Incipits are quoted, within quotation marks, only where the text is not matched with a (relatively) modern edition. But what of the *tituli* accompanying the works in the edition? The edition’s indications of author and title appear to be transcribed and to be modified by editorial intrusions in brackets. Quotation marks positively indicate the words of the book in hand, brackets positively indicate editorial wording, but what of words with neither quotation marks nor brackets? The two conventions do not sit well together. Can one infer that the mere absence of brackets, as distinct from the presence of quotation marks, means that the title has been transcribed from the edition? I suspect not and fear an extensive normalization of titles.

⁸ Needham, ‘Copy Description’, pp. 205–06.

⁹ Mary Fuertes Boynton, ‘Simon Alcock on Expanding the Sermon’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 34 (1941), 201–16.

There is no simple test to determine what is a good normalized title. For a variety of reasons classical works, authentic patristic works, and book-length fifteenth-century works are more susceptible to normalization than medieval works. It may not be accidental that works that interested humanists are most easily recognized under the normalized titles of the incunabulist literature. Many pseudonymous or medieval works are recognized today primarily by titles given to them by an early editor, not necessarily before 1501. I should prefer to see titles established on the best textual evidence, which for many works will mean the evidence of the manuscripts, critically considered. That is a task for textual bibliographers, if any can be found to undertake it. I make no complaint about what has been done here, which has been to make a join with current, not to be confused with modern, scholarship. The same may be said of the attribution to authors, where the catalogue has done what it reasonably can to connect with the current state of knowledge. The precise form of authors' names can be a delicate issue, and here there is clearly a conservative approach. Guilelmus Hentisberus has been retained from the practice of the editions and is glossed in the notes; the index, however, makes no concession to anyone seeking William of Heytesbury. If William is to be Latinized as Guilelmus, what allowed three subsidiary authors to get through in the index and in the descriptions as *Wilhelmus*?

One question of transcription that continues to worry me is that of titles in the edition. On many pages of this catalogue one finds the first item of the edition is given as '[Title-page.]'. I do not see any default that allows me to reconstruct the title-page from either the heading at the start of the edition or the identification of the text. Take, for example, William of Gouda on the mass, Cologne: [Heinrich Quentell, c. 1485–89] (Bod-Inc G-304). Heading and standard title are given as *Guilelmus de Gouda, Expositio mysteriorum missae*, but the opening of the text (a1^v) is transcribed as 'Tractatus de expositione misse. Editus a fratre Guilhelmo de Gouda ordinis minorum de obseruantia. Incipit feliciter', corresponding exactly with another Cologne edition, G-303. Now G-303 has no title-page but G-304 has (a1^r): how am I to infer what it said? In fact the title-page reads *Expositio misteriorum misse et verus modus rite celebrandi*. These fifteenth-century title-pages might actually help one to understand how the books came to be known under the tiresome short titles or headings that have become such an obstacle to someone who knows the work as a critically edited text rather than as found in incunabula. And is it not a breach of faith with printed-book cataloguing as a whole to ignore title-pages where they exist? There is an important dialogue between how the edition identifies works and how we identify them, just as there is between individual manuscripts and a text-critical reading of the manuscript evidence as a whole.

These headings, we are told, are to ensure ease of reference between incunable catalogues (p. lxxix), and they are taken from ISTC unless the heading in ISTC is ‘positively misleading’. What this means is unclear. Where ISTC’s headings fail to identify the author correctly or to indicate what the work contains, they are retained in Bod-Inc, which seeks to correct such misleading signals in the descriptions, notes, or index. ISTC took its headings from Goff in many cases, and Goff followed his predecessors; GW, vol. 8, p. 5*, admits that its first recourse for headings is to Hain’s *Repertorium Biblicum* (Stuttgart and Paris, 1826–38). But I inquire too far. We must simply accept that these headings, the identifiers of the books in (some) other incunable catalogues, serve no purpose of identifying author or work: they are to integrate the catalogue into the network of incunable catalogues.

Is it proper to treat all works in the edition on an equal footing? Substantial and recognizable works — say Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei* — are different from editorial prefaces, commendatory verses, and so on, which originate with the edition, though they might then be passed from one edition to another. Authorial prefaces are properly a part of the work. In describing editions of *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine’s preface is not separately entered, but for many works the preface does have a separate entry. If one were defining the work in a repertory, then it would be proper to include the incipits of both preface and the body of the work, but is that appropriate in a catalogue of editions? The letter to Lanfranc that accompanied the copy of Anselm’s *Monologion* sent to Canterbury is not always transmitted with the work, which has its own preface; it is interesting to find this letter prefaced to the *Monologion* in an early collected works, [Basel: Johann Amerbach, not after 1497] (Bod-Inc A-304). The notes here cite the pages of Schmitt’s edition, but there is no recognition that this may be a significant variation; the usual preface is in this case not separated. These are minor inconsistencies. What is clearly of value is to itemize every work, including the verses and editorial prefaces. It is scarcely credible how few catalogues can be bothered to tell the user what are the *opuscula* of Augustine or Thomas Aquinas or Jean Gerson contained in any particular edition. Someone looking for a work should just find copies and look, I suppose. No more. And Bod-Inc is truly innovative in itemizing the letters and sermons in some of the large collections. With those of Augustine or Jerome there can be much variation, resulting from the manuscript transmission; with late medieval collections there is more likely to be a standard series forming a work, and in such cases itemization is not required. The important point is that *opera* and *opuscula* have been banished to incunabulists’ headings.

For a catalogue that emphasizes its attention to works, however, it is a pity — though perhaps inevitable — that for some of the most important textual elements of the undertaking one has to refer back to GW to understand what is going on. Take, for example, Aesopus, *Fabulae*, a heading that might cover

a number of different works in a variety of different forms. The headings take us through *Vita et fabulae* [Greek] (A-042), *Vita et fabulae* [Greek and Latin] (A-043), *Vita et fabulae* [Latin] (A-045), *Fabulae* (A-048), *Fabulae* [French] (A-050), *Vita et fabulae* (A-051), and so on, to *Aesopus moralisatus cum commento* (A-056), *Aesopus moralisatus cum commento et glossa interlineari* (A-059), to *Aesopus Moralisatus* (A-065) and to *Vita Aesopi* (A-069). In Bod-Inc these headings are not conjoined with the notes on identification of works but derive from GW. It is, indeed, an indispensable feature of GW that, where there are many editions that can be classified textually, the scheme is set out at the head of the section and explained. Identification of works for each edition does not avoid the necessity of this classification, and I wonder how far one can tell the difference after H, when Bod-Inc no longer has the guidance of GW in these matters. These explanatory schemata only work in a sequential general catalogue: they do not work in the non-sequential ISTC any more than in the selective Bod-Inc, but they are necessary for the user to understand the fit of editions and works.

At every turn one finds some compromise between conventions of incunabulism and the aim, simply, to itemize the contents of the books.

The heading 'Augustinus Hipponensis, *De vita Christiana*' [A-606 – A-612] makes a connection with GW's entry under Pseudo-Augustinus and ISTC's under Augustinus, Aurelius, *De vita Christiana*. (Is this a case where ISTC was positively misleading?) The work is here titled 'Augustinus [pseudo-; Pelagius; Fastidius]: *De vita christiana*'; it is then identified by reference to *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 40, cols 1031–33, 1033–46, i.e. the prologue and body of the work separately entered, and in the description of each of five editions the prologue is referred to CPL 730 and the body of the work to an article on its supposed authorship, G. Cannone, 'Sull' attribuzione del *De uita christiana* a Pelagio', *Vetera christianorum*, 9 (1972), 219–31 (following CIBN), a study not cited even in the third edition of the standard repertory for the works of the Latin Fathers, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (CPL) (Turnhout, 1995). In this case one is given no quoted title or incipit from any of the five editions; GW has transcriptional rules and provides us with that, but it appears obvious enough that the work was titled *Augustinus de uita christiana* in the editions, and that outside the editions evidence or opinion has favoured Pelagius or Fastidius as the author. CPL enters it as Pelagius, *Liber de uita Christiana* (Ps. Augustinus); notes that manuscript copies are numerous, especially under the name of Augustine; and tells us about the authorship, 'Genuinitatem defendit F. E. Evans [...]; ualde dubitat H. J. Frede' (whose *Kirchenschriftsteller* continues to enter the work under Ps. Augustine). (It is typical of CPL that *genuinitas* is associated with a constructed attribution, but that is another story.) In Bod-Inc these editions are all indexed under Augustinus, Fastidius, and Pelagius; Fastidius

and Pelagius cannot be found by any of the search-fields in ISTC, though both attributions are noted there with reference to Denise Hillard's *Bibliothèque Mazarine* (Catalogues régionaux des incunables des bibliothèques publiques de France, 6; Paris, 1989), p. 236. BSB-Ink has gone with mid-twentieth-century patristic scholarship and entered the editions under Pelagius without even mentioning that they consistently ascribe the work to Augustine. Of course, *De uita christiana* was also printed in books where its position in the contents did not earn it mention in the heading. To find these from Bod-Inc, one can look up every entry under Pelagius in the index, follow up those under A, and read the contents-descriptions, thereby finding three under Augustine's *Opuscula*, Bod-Inc A-507, A-508, A-510, and another under the heading *De anima et spiritu* (A-566). To find them from ISTC, one may start with the title-field, which brings up editions subordinated to the headings for Augustinus, *De anima et spiritu* (Bod-Inc A-566) and *De uanitate saeculi* (CIBN A-767). ISTC's note about the attributions of *De uita christiana* is repeated against *De anima et spiritu*, without indication as to which work it relates to; the pseudo-Augustinian *De spiritu et anima* ('Quoniam dictum est mihi ut meipsum cognoscam', PL 40, cols 779–832) is medieval rather than antique. As for *De uanitate saeculi*, this is the pseudo-Augustinian sermon, 'In hac uita positi, fratres, ita agite ut cum hinc migraueritis' (PL 40, cols 1183–86, and again, 1213–14; P.-P. Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de Saint Augustin* (Steenbrugge, 1976), p. 230).

One of these five editions, [Lyons: Johannes Siber, c. 1486] (Bod-Inc A-611), is represented here by a copy bound after a near-contemporary copy of the *Expositio hymnorum*, [Geneva: Louis Cruse, c. 1490] (E-069), shelfmark Auct. 1Q.5.65. The front endleaves contain hymns and notes that obviously belong with the *Expositio hymnorum*, but they are described under A-611, and not mentioned under E-069, because convention (p. lxxxiv) attaches this part of the description to the component that appears first in the alphanumeric arrangement of the catalogue. This is not helpful, and there is no compensating help in the index, because neither the manuscript hymns nor even the printed exposition fall within the terms of the index.

The two most elementary functions of a catalogue are to describe the books and to lead the user to find in them whatever he is looking for. It seems perverse that so much effort has gone into setting out and identifying the contents of the books and yet there is no index of works. Reliance is placed in part on the alphabetical ordering of brief incunabulist headings and in part on an index of authors, translators, editors, and dedicatees. This index has many merits, especially the bringing together of different roles — translators, editors, and dedicatees are so designated in the index, and by default everyone else is an 'author' — in the textual formation of the books and the wealth of annotation on individuals. One may use it on its own as a work of

reference, though it will soon have a rival, when the seventh volume of BSB-Ink appears. But indexing works by author alone is bordering on the useless to the very users for whom this catalogue has most to offer. And reliance on the arrangement of derivative concise headings seems almost to contradict the aim of itemizing the contents. BSB-Ink uses an elaborate system of cross-references to compensate, rightly criticized by Needham, who provides instead a concise but informative model for an index entry.¹⁰ This would have produced a really useful index, allowing one not only to find editions of a text irrespective of the favoured heading but at a glance to see the varied contexts in which it was printed. It would have solved some of the problems for the user approaching either Aesop or Pseudo-Augustine. The model of medieval manuscript catalogues would have served as an example here, but with manuscripts one expects not only indexes of author and title but also indexes of incipit, a surer route to bring together copies of the same work travelling under different titles or ascriptions. Incipits are a means to an end, however, of identifying and bringing together copies of the same work, whatever their titles. And an intelligent index should do that. The want of an index of works is the chief deficiency of this admirable catalogue, all the more so because Bod-Inc sets out to identify works.

Other omissions will matter to incunabulists. The edition does not provide numerical concordances to the major catalogues nor even a table of the books in the catalogue arranged by shelfmark.

One appendix, curiously, deals with six books that are not part of the Bodleian collection, though two are deposited there (pp. 2961–62); this is hardly a round-up of other incunabula in Oxford. Another appendix gives brief entries — heading, imprint, bibliographical references, and shelfmark — for eight editions ‘included in ISTC but excluded from this catalogue’. This opens up a serious question. Some are ‘former incunabula’, books that contain no evidence of date and were once thought to date from before 1501 but now no longer; others carry dates and it is unclear why they were admitted to ISTC. The list is surely incomplete: I cannot easily correlate the unreported holdings of the Bodleian with both ISTC and Bod-Inc, but I mention the works of Marinus Becichemus (1468–1526), for whom ISTC has two editions, under the headings ‘Panegyricus Leonardo Lauretano’, [Brescia:] Angelus Britannicus, [1504] (ISTC ib00291900), and a work on the two Plinys, ‘Variarum obseruationum collectanea’, [Brescia:] Angelus Britannicus, [after 5 Aug. 1504] (HC 2729*, Proctor 7003, BSB-Ink B-254, ISTC ib00291950). The Bodleian has copies of both: ‘Panegyricus’, Bodl. Meerm. 110; ‘Variarum obseruationum collectanea’, Bodl. Byw. G 6.21 and F 1.22 (1) Th. Seld. The work came to my notice in the early-sixteenth-

¹⁰ Needham, ‘Copy Description’, p. 215.

century catalogue of the brethren's library at Syon Abbey, where a second-
folio match identifies 'Opera Marini Becichemi Scodrensis oratoris', given
c. 1520 by Richard Reynolds, OSS, with the work on Pliny.¹¹ The catalogue
descriptions in the main Bodleian catalogue and ISTC have both drastically,
differently, and unintelligibly shortened the title, and ISTC has not added
these copies to its record: might the absence of these copies from ISTC
explain the absence of these editions from the Appendix? I note too that
Antonius Cermisonus, *Consilia medica* (Bod-Inc C-166) is in the catalogue,
dated (following Goff) '[c. 1495–7]', while ISTC prefers to follow CIBN and
date it '[c. 1502–3]', which would move it into the appendix. These books
are not incunabula, but they present the problems of incunabula, and it is
not good enough that their treatment should be so hit and miss. Without
being strict about the fifteenth century — whose variable end-date is dis-
cussed by Paul Needham, 'Counting Incunables: The IISTC CD-ROM',
Harvard Library Quarterly, 61 (2000), 457–529 (pp. 508–13) — I think these
undated editions need and deserve the incunable treatment as much as an
edition with the date 1500 printed in it. ISTC needs a clear policy, and if an
edition is admitted, copies should be recorded. Is it necessary to remind
early-book specialists that in 1898 Robert Proctor intended a Part II to his
Index, containing 'a similar list of the books in the British Museum printed
in the years 1501 to 1520'?¹² He brought out the first section in 1903, and
Frank Isaac prepared sections 2–3 (1938).¹³ This appears to me, an amateur,
to provide the clearest reference for these two editions, and even provides a
lucid abridgement of both titles (Isaac 13863, 13864). In his foreword to this
book in 1938, Stephen Gaselee expressed the hope that the rest of Part II,
much of it already prepared in the Museum, would follow 'in about a year's
time': another orphan of war.

Attention devoted to works and copies has left bibliographical informa-
tion about editions somewhat out in the cold. The strategy was not to do
new physical descriptions where one already existed in one of the major
catalogues such as GW. In most cases, therefore, physical details of the
edition will be derivative. It is not possible to ascertain how many editions
are unique to the Bodleian's collections, nor how many editions are repre-
sented here that have not yet been adequately described by other catalogues
whose primary interest is the physical bibliography of the edition. The user
of ISTC must judge whether Bod-Inc will be the best source for this

¹¹ *Syon Abbey*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, 9 (London, 2001), p. 9.

¹² Robert Proctor, *An Index to the Early Printed Books in the British Museum*, Part I: *From the Invention of Printing to the Year MD*, 2 vols (London, 1898), 1, p. 7.

¹³ Robert Proctor, *An Index to the Early Printed Books in the British Museum*. Part II: MDI–MDXX, section 1, *Germany* (London, 1903); Frank Isaac, *An Index to the Early Printed Books in the British Museum*. Part II: MDI–MDXX, section II, *Italy*, section III, *Switzerland and Eastern Europe* (London, 1938).

information, but for students of fifteenth-century printers Bod-Inc will only rarely be a first port of call for the physical detail of editions. In the matter of collations, at least, the facts can be verified if necessary. For the assigning of editions to printer and date, the information is in most cases derivative and even the form is derivative. Imprint statements now follow ISTC as a quasi-standard, at least in anglophone learning.¹⁴ The layout of this catalogue would have been much improved if imprint statements came immediately after the headings. Instead, they are postponed to a point between the sometimes lengthy description of contents and notes on the copies, making them sometimes hard to find. Yet imprint statements are part of the only natural heading for an edition. In a case such as Antonius Cermisonus, ISTC would originally have followed Goff, and it was probably from ISTC that Bod-Inc picked up its imprint statement, sometime in the 1990s, before ISTC was updated against CIBN. In these matters one now relies on ISTC always to represent the best opinion. It must be a comfort to those in Paris and Berlin who continue to labour at the book-face that their discoveries will in due course replace less authoritative opinions and be disseminated by ISTC.

Catalogues of this kind take years to make. Bod-Inc itself has taken more than ten years, and once under way it would be difficult for the method to be modified to take account of recent scholarship on cataloguing methods and on questions of authorship and title. Catalogues of this kind are rarely done a second time, and in the past they have had to serve us from generation to generation. With Bod-Inc we may look forward to online publication of the underlying database in the not-too-distant future. And with ISTC also online, we may contemplate the possibility of a complex general catalogue.

It is more than forty years since Vera Sack foresaw that collection catalogues would become complementary to a general catalogue; she envisaged a time when GW would be complete and catalogues of collections had only to describe the features specific to individual copies in order to harvest all that was needed to understand the books printed in the fifteenth century.¹⁵ That time may never come. Who knows where we shall be by the time GW is finished? Its overarching role has — for the time being — been taken by ISTC. But ISTC is a database and does not seek to provide the detail to serve as a descriptive catalogue. It could, however, take the step of embracing the most important descriptive catalogues and link the user judiciously to the best bibliographical descriptions and to the best account of the textual contents of editions. Bod-Inc has made a major contribution to harvesting the information, and if Bod-Inc goes online, then ISTC might connect with it. Who knows how long such arrangements will last? This will not bring us to

¹⁴ Needham, 'Bodleian Library Incunables', p. 354.

¹⁵ Kurt Ohly and Vera Sack, *Inkunabelkatalog der Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek und anderer öffentlicher Sammlungen in Frankfurt am Main*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt, 1966–67), p. xxv.

that day when we shall have Needham's mythical index of incunable authors and works, but it will certainly help us both to know what fifteenth-century printers printed and to find their editions. The task of recording the textual contents of all incunabula is finite. There were 29,777 of them, according to ISTC on 8 January 2008, of which 19 per cent have been done by Bod-Inc. An index framed with some understanding of questions of authorship and attribution, titles, anonymous works, and textual variety would be an important addition, showing not only what works belong to the first age of printing but also those that made the transition in the same period from manuscript to print. Such an index may now belong only to the next technology.

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