
Sidney F. Huttner

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/shuttner/7/
Book Review


Reviewed by Sidney F. Huttner, Head of the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University.

One of the advertisements for this book asks what you do when a pig tells you your cockroach has a hickey in the screamer. Glaister’s entries for these printers’ terms, each a sentence or two, will allow you to understand the sentence, but that seems slim justification for purchase of a $75.00 reference book — especially if you’ve already let the Book-of-the-Month Club sell you the Compact Edition of the *OED*, complete with magnifying glass. A glossary is both more and less than a dictionary, however: the *OED* caught only one of these four words in their printers’ sense while Glaister makes no attempt to include in the alphabetical sequence all the terms he defines in his essays.

This new edition, then, much revised and expanded from the long out of print 1960 first edition, consists of a few pages of preliminary matter followed by 3,200 entries arranged in alphabetical order over 526 double column pages. The entries range in length from a few words to a couple of pages; one of the longest, “Bible printing in England,” is 2,985 words. Typical entries 200 to 300 words. There are also four appendices. The first presents specimens of 44 text faces and 46 display faces, mostly in modern formulations; the second a list of English-Latin place name equivalents; the third proof correction symbols reprinted from a British Standard Institutions publication; and the last a short reading list arranged in seven sections, that for bookbinding containing only 24 references and five of those to manuals (Burdett, Darley, Johnson, Town, and Vaughn).

A surprisingly substantial part of the book relates to bookbinding, however. There are 59 “see” references under “bookbinding materials” (from “American Russia” to “watered silk”), 97 under “bookbinding methods” (“adhesive binding” to “wrappering”), 186 under “bookbinding styles and binding features” (“ajouré” to “yellow backs”), and 29 under “bookbinding tools and machines” (“arming press” to “trundle”). There are, in addition, numerous entries for individuals (from “Abby, John Roland” too Zaehnsdorf, Joseph”) and, since binding is not always easily separated from other aspects of the book, there is information of interest to bookbinders in other entries.

There are numerous illustrations, thoughtfully selected and often informative, although those for bookbinding frequently leave much to be desired. The entry for “bookbinding,” for example, consists of two columns of text and four pages of black and white photographs so reduced and murky that one wonders why Glaister bothered to assemble them. No information is given on the size of the original volumes (most appear to be folios), but reduced to 2 x 3 inches even the gross design features they
were apparently chosen to illustrate largely disappear. Try to find the chain on the chained books. In
general, perhaps inevitably, the diagrams and drawings come through well, the photographs less well.

If the illustrations are problematic, the writing is not. This book is a pleasure to browse, and hence to
own. Although in several months, with a copy at home, and this review on my mind, I thought only once
to consult it (and was disappointed on a question of some names and dates in early English lithography),
each time I’ve hauled it off the shelf I’ve soon found myself chuckling and muttering, “Ah, interesting.”
You don’t want to rely on the copy in your local library’s reference department for those pleasures.

The entry for “adhesive binding,” for example, tipped me to a wrinkle available to publishers which I
have nowhere seen mentioned in bibliography. In cutting away the spine preparatory to gluing, Glaister
notes, “It is possible to leave the signature folds intact at head and tail, giving the illusion of sewn
sections to the finished book.” Of course it is. A trip to my shelves to examine recently acquired hard-
cover books, assumed machine sewn on the evidence of apparent sections, confirmed that publishers
are making frequent use of this option. Bibliographers, trained to correctly describe raised cords and
false bands, must henceforth distinguish perfect adhesive bindings from imperfect ones. (We in the
States might want to dub the former Andrew Jackson bindings [“All faults showing!”] in honor of the
President in office the year caoutchouc binding was patented, if only to dub the latter Richard Nixon
bindings [“Would you buy a hard-cover book from this man?”].)

*Glaister’s Glossary* is sewn. A co-publication of George Allen & Unwin in England and the University of
California in the United States (necessitating two states of the title page; the second leaf of the first
section has its conjugate cut away), the edition was printed in England and bound by Dorstel Press
Limited in Harlow, Essex. W. Hughes of that firm has kindly provided details of the binding.

The sheets were folded to 32-page sections on Cundall knife type folding machines and Glastonbury
Antique Laid Ivory endpapers (122 gm/m²) tipped on, using a Colmatic machine. The first and last
sections were reinforced with linen using a bracket stripping machine and the sections gathered and
collated by hand before sewing on Smyth No. 12 semiautomatic sewers with blended terylene thread
(Oxley No. 75), nipping and smashing on a Greig Nipping/Smashing machine, gluing up on a Smyth Book
Back Gluer, and cutting on a Krause 3-knife guillotine. The tops were sprayed blue with spirit dye.

The cases were assembled on a Kolbus Casemaker from 2900 micron Eska Board, manufactured in
Holland, and two Red Bridge (Bolton) Limited fabrics: Buckram No. 57 (a brown/maroon velum finish)
for the sides, then blocked on a flat bed hand fed Kolbus machine using Fryco 7040 Newvap Foil.
(Glaister has a good picture of a bindery full of similar cases on page 85.)

Blocks and cases were brought together on a Smyth Rounder/Backer, a Kolbus H. L. lining machine, a
Kolbus E.M.P. 36-Casing-in machine, and a Kolbus F.E. press, all linked in line. The pre-sewn headbands
are Arnott No. 64 WS (dark blue and white), the first lining a cotton mull and the second a crepe
expansive paper. The completed books were inspected, jacketed, and packed by hand.
If you go after a copy, seek out one still in its corrugated board packing carton: the review copy, at least, arrived with two 7 x 10 inch pieces of that 2900 micron Eska Board filling up a bit of extra space and eminently suited to traditional binderly recycling. They’ll save a penny on your next quartern book.