VIII

Bibliography as Chronicle

As it recalls evidence of history, bibliography records the evidence of the growth of the printed record and helps to measure the history itself.¹

The term historical bibliography is of course a tautology: all bibliography is historical. Its objects were all created in the past. Readers ask where the ideas they read came from and wonder where they lead. Enumerative bibliographies are by nature a form of historia litteraria. But should lists arranged by date or period be seen as historical bibliographies?² Analytical, enumerative, and textual bibliography have their own history: is historical bibliography not then a composite of their histories?³ If historical bibliography is the history of books, and books are both physical objects and the ideas in them, then is not all of intellectual and cultural history subsumed in historical bibliography? Other scholars’ turf is dangerous territory, and imperialism is not nice, especially when it threatens powerful allies.

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¹Ian R. Willison’s early essay, Towards a General Theory of Historical Bibliography (1958; Northwestern Polytechnic, London, School of Librarianship; Occasional Papers, 11), in its earnest, gnomic, and delightful way, rather gropes for the context of this chapter, among other things.
²Many enumerative lists use the subtitle, “A Historical Bibliography.” Charles Langois’s Manuel de bibliographie historique (1896) – its second ed. (1901-04) ran to about 5,000 titles – is essentially a source book for historians, as is Edith M. Coulter’s Guide to Historical Bibliographies (Univ. of California Pr., 1927, rev. ed.,1935) and a many other titles.
³David McKitterick, in Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order (Cambridge Univ. Pr. 2003), uses the term “historical bibliography” to present many valuable perspectives on the uses of analytical bibliography. Norman E. Binns, An Introduction to Historical Bibliography (Association of Assistant Librarians, 1953) is mostly a history of books, while Derek Williamson, Historical Bibliography (Bingley, 1967) is a textbook on the study of printed evidence.
Most bibliographers grew up reading widely. Poaching across intellectual boundaries was second nature. Their impressionable years benefited from “book appreciation:” popular histories, lore recounted by those who love books and ask others to share their love, long on bibliophily and short on forensics. Their introduction to the book crafts was through works rich in romantic legendry. Douglas McMurtrie, entrepreneur par excellence, honored The Masters. S.H. Steinberg traced the events as a historian, Warren Chappell reflected the tastes of a respected book designer. These books, while generally authoritative, are not self-consciously academic. For scholarship, German Kulturgeschichte seemed to offer an answer. Karl Schottenloher, noted scholar of German Renaissance printing, explored the book as it reflected and in turn affected art, philosophy, commerce, and science. His brief chapters are devoted to such topics as books during the Thirty Years’ War, libraries and collecting, exhibitions, and art book production. Of the hundreds of names in his index, very few are printers, publishers, dealers, or collectors.

To French annales scholars, such wide canvases were imprecise and vague, Germanic, not subject to testing, analogue in their concepts in an era that was becoming digital. L’Apparition du livre (1958), begun by Lucien Febvre and completed by Henri-Jean Martin, is rich in maps, charts, and statistics. In its wake has come a rich Francophone treasury of rigorous and stimulating scholarship, highlighted by the magnificent Histoire de l’édition française, the earliest and still by far the most lavish of the recent national book histories.

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4 The Golden Book (Covici, 1927; later The Book, 1937 and later; Oxford Univ. Pr. after 1943).
9 The seminal study is probably Martin’s dissertation, Livre: pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle (Droz, 1959). No less influential have been the writings of the prolific Roger Chartier, including The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France (Princeton Univ. Pr., 1987), The Order of Books (Stanford Univ. Pr., 1994), Forms and Meanings (Univ. of Pennsylvania Pr., 1995), and A History of Reading in the West (Polity, 1999).
10 Histoire de l’édition française (Promodis, 1982-85), in four large, handsomely illustrated volumes: (1) Le livre conquérant; (2) Le livre triomphant, 1660-1830; (3) Le temps des éditeurs: du romantisme à la Belle Époque; and (4) Le livre concurrencé, 1900-1950.
Two more conceptions of historical bibliography underlie the Printing and the Mind of Man exhibitions (London, 1963), one at Earl’s Court on the history of the crafts and technology of printing, the other at the British Museum on the first printings of the landmarks of civilization. The prime mover behind the events, Stanley Morrison, called on his considerable political skills to mobilized the printing industry, diversified and competitive, and the no less contentious world of libraries, collectors, and antiquarian dealers.

Other landmark scholarship has further diffused the focus. How has printing served as a change agent? Elizabeth Eisenstein has organized and evaluated the proposals of earlier historians on the question of the overall cultural impact of printing. Enumerative and analytical bibliography can both be implied out of her historiographical narrative. More defined in scope but no less provocative is Robert Darnton’s account of the publishing history of the great eighteenth-century French *Encyclopédie*, notably based on archival work. He has also given us the best defining essays on an emerging field of study. Michael Giesecke discussed book production form the account from the vantage of the history of technology, while Adrian Johns prepared an extended complement to and dissent with Eisenstein, based mostly on English Restoration printers. The latest major contribution, by Andrew Pettegree, suggests that earlier printers did job printing as well as the heroic books for which they are famous.

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11 Both London exhibitions were described in a booklet, *Printing and the Mind of Man: Assembled at the British Museum and at Earls Court, London 16–27 July 1963* (F. W. Bridges, 1963). The Earl’s Court part was the Eleventh International Printing Machinery and Allied Trades Exhibition, organized by the Association of British Manufacturers of Printers’ Machinery, while the British Museum part was expanded into a coffee-table book called *Printing and the Mind of Man: A Descriptive Catalogue Illustrating the Impact of Print on the Evolution of Western Civilization During Five Centuries*, with a notable introduction by Denys Hay (Cassell, 1967; German ed., Pressler, 1983, with a new intro. by Percy H. Muir, bibliographies by Peter Amelung, and a revised index).
14 *Der Buchdruck in der frühen Neuzeit* (Suhrkamp, 1991)
15 *The Nature of the Book* (Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1998).
16 *The Book in the Renaissance* (Yale Univ. Pr., 200-). Pettegree’s point is hardly new to most printing historians, but the contexts he discusses is impressive.
Crafts and technology are important, but so are readers, and common ones as well as the learned and influential. Other works reflect interests in education, reading, commerce, and communication, in recent years gender studies and the history of technology as well. Thirty years ago Darnton was already describing book history as “interdisciplinarity run riot.”17 Robert Fraser adds an injunction that is easy to forget because it is so obvious:18

Book history . . . cannot and should not be construed as a process of inevitable, irreversible evolution, or even as the product of intelligently ordered design. It is a battlefield in which technologies slog it out and voices strain to be heard, and where economics and commerce vie or conspire with the needs of self-expression.

Systematic, analytical, and descriptive bibliography are established fields that aspire to objectivity. Historical bibliography needs to be convincing: it cries out for attitude. Being youthful, it has delighted in theory in the self-conscious contexts of academia, in which craftsmanship, collecting, and reading are abstractions. However sound its source work, its imaginative agenda has often led to dicey relationships with other established fields – where, however, its imaginative ideas are often rather admired.

To call the field “historical bibliography” may bother those for whom all bibliography is dull and reactionary. Two alternatives are popular (and those who like to argue can in turn find both arguable): for the anthropologically-minded, “print culture” (but are manuscripts excluded?); and for historians, “book history” (but are pamphlets, periodicals, ephemera, and other “non-book” objects ignored? A variant, histoire du livre, pays respect to annales scholarship.) The proliferation of journals, books, and websites, classes, conferences, and general interest relating to this study should make it clear: the field of historical bibliography/print culture/book history has been flourishing over the last half-century, the last few decades in particular.19

By whatever name, these studies are based in bibliographical evidence from the past: physical books themselves, and records of their use. The chronicle of

18 Book History through Postcolonial Eyes (Routledge, 2008), p. 105.
the physical books, as part of this anthology of perspectives, is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

IWINSKI REVISITED

A question as absurd as it is useful has so far been largely peripheral to the agenda of historical or any other specialty of bibliography: how many books have been printed over the course of history? What is the magnitude of the world’s bibliographical record In 1911, Boleslas Iwinski (1879-1919), economist, labor organizer, “licencié en Sciences Economique,” and member of the Paul Otlet’s Institute, announced that the Universal Library had 10,378,365 books and 71,248 periodicals in it.20 Iwinski’s work is a landmark, but has anyone particularly cared? His totals – probably reliable within a range of 50 to 200 per cent either way – were in fact updated twice, and auspiciously: by Georg Schneider through 1930 for his Handbuch der Bibliographie, and by LeRoy Merritt through 1940 to advise in the plans for expanding union catalogues in American research libraries. 21

Iwinski was not the first to attempt to estimate a total. In 1772, Johann Christoph Gatterer noticed the value of book statistics in the totality of world history.22 The next studies came much later. In 1923, Albert Cim proposed 13,250,000 through 1950; 30-35,000 for the fifteenth century, 150-200,000 for

20 “La statistique internationale des imprimés,” Bulletin de l’Institut International de Bibliographie, 16 (1911), 1–139. In 1910 he prepared a 55-page preliminary report, La statistique internationale des livres, which was expanded into the 1911 study. Earlier statistical essays in the Bulletin, in 1896 and 1900, also likely involved Iwinski. (The Bulletin ceased publication with this issue: one can see it, staggered by the thought of reporting that the world had a population problem, heroically sacrificing itself.)


21 Schneider’s totals are in the Handbuch der Bibliographie (Hiersemann, 1930), pp. 159–368 passim; Merritt’s (“Resources of American Libraries: A Quantitative Picture”) in Robert B. Downs, Union Catalogs in the United States (ALA, 1942), pp. 58–96, esp. pp. 77–82 (“World Book Production”). “La statistique internationale des imprimés,” Bulletin de l’Institut International de Bibliographie, 16 (1911), 1–139. In 1910 he prepared a 55-page preliminary report, La statistique internationale des livres, which was expanded into the 1911 study. Earlier statistical essays in the Bulletin, in 1896 and 1900, also likely involved Iwinski. (The Bulletin ceased publication with this issue: one can see it, staggered by the thought of reporting that the world had a population problem, heroically sacrificing itself.)

22 Gatterer, “Allgemeine Übersicht der ganzen Litteratur in den letzten 3 Jahren,” appeared in 1772 in his Historisches Journal. Its totals are among many used in his Ideal einer allgemeinen Weltstatistik (1773), as part of his hermeneutical approach to history.
the sixteenth, no numbers for the seventeen or eighteenth; 8.25 million for the nineteenth and 5 million for the first half of the twentieth).\textsuperscript{23}

From the 1960s came several think-tank projections. One total of 100 million items may not be far off – conventional wisdom generally agrees – but in a study that assumes a measure of authority, one would appreciate some documentation.\textsuperscript{24} Another study in 2000 reported 968,735 “book items” through 1996. It is rigorously documented, based on UNESCO totals, but Iwinski is not mentioned, nor can I find any mention of books before 1990, and the name of the study (“How Much Information?”) suggests that the purpose of the study is to find a multiplier that will convert books into binary digits.\textsuperscript{25} Nor have I located the source work behind a Google announcement that, as of August 28, 2009, there were 168,178,719 book titles in the world.

Such totals are based on surviving copies – books that are not extant, however important to the history of bibliography, are not included – as listed in sources that aspire to Universal Bibliography (as discussed in Chapter V.) The totals below are based on the evidence of bibliographical sources, with details that are rich in perspectives on the history of bibliography. My methods have been inspired by Hugh Amory’s masterful “Pseudodoxia Bibliographica, or When is a Book not a Book? When it’s a Record.”\textsuperscript{26}

My goal instead is to suggest the dimensions of the record as part of the historical agenda of bibliography. The “New Iwinski” requires two further discussions. “Beyond Iwinski” treats the book forms that were not part of Iwinski’s bibliographical universe a century ago, but are part of ours; and “On Biblioprosopography” suggests some of the uses of the numbers. My totals are

\textsuperscript{23} Cim, Le livre (Flammarion, 1923); Labarre, Histoire du livre (Presses universitaires de France, 1970), p. 113.
\textsuperscript{25} Peter Lyman and Hal Varian, “How Much Information,” online through the School of Information Management and Systems at University of California, Berkeley, 2000, revised 2003.
\textsuperscript{26} Amory’s text was prepared for a Consortium of European Research Libraries conference on the Hand Press Book (HPB) project, Brussels, November 4, 1999, and issued in The Scholar and the Database (2001), ed. by Lotte Hellenga, pp. 1–14. Delightful to read, this essay will be recalled several times in this chapter.
in general orders of magnitude, which look rather more credible than exact numbers. The totals on p. 000 still seem precious.

Otlet, in order to help him plan his work, order card trays, and calculate space, had presumably asked Iwinski to suggest the magnitude of his universal bibliography. Iwinski deserves respect less for his totals than for his diligence.\(^{27}\) The project itself was the national a– which may of course have been Otlet’s This A national approach also served Otlet’s cause of international cooperation.\(^{28}\) His national totals were assembled out of three kinds of evidence: bibliographies, statistics, and expertise. Let us look at each.

**Bibliographies.** Retrospective national lists celebrate a nation’s bibliographical heritage. Most of them testify to diligent searching and scrupulous scholarship.\(^{29}\) Rarely are they alike, however, and their totals usually need to be adjusted. Some are very old; others include materials in the national language published abroad (e.g., the British STC) or about the country (e.g. Ferguson for early Australia). Some are based on library holdings (e.g., the Italian EDIT, or the early German VD) others on trade lists (e.g., the later German GV). They may include titles announced but not known to be extant (e.g., the original Evans for the U.S.) or only titles extant (e.g., the “Short-Title Evans” or Shaw-Shoemaker). Most of the totals need to be adjusted, however minimally. Current national lists serve to oil the nation’s joints of commerce, even when they are subject to political and financial demands. Bibliographies often serve as a reality check on their arbitrary numerical data. Trade lists, for instance, depend on a marriage of publishers and booksellers – convenient and necessary but rarely perfect. Foreign imprints may be excluded, even if local booksellers

\(^{27}\) Iwinski also included subject totals, based on decimal classification. Subjects overlap and change, however; national borders change too, but imprints tie down the sites. National sources are also the best way to get numbers, as Schneider and Merritt later agreed.

\(^{28}\) An approach by nations is also rather at odds with the internationalistic agenda proposed a century later, for instance in *Books without Borders: The Cross-National Dimensions in Print Culture*, ed. Robert Fraser and Mary Hammond (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), also Sydney S. Shep, “Imagining Post-National Book History,” *PBSA* 104 (2010), 253–68.

\(^{29}\) Friedrich Domay, *Bibliographie der Nationalen Bibliographien* (Hiersemann, 1987) is invaluable for early lists, Barbara L. Bell’s *An Annotated Guide to Current National Bibliographies* (1986; 2nd ed., 1998) for recent lists. The annual and online Libri Casalini Reference Resources Europe lists keep the European story up to date. I have also used Besterman’s *WBB*, where national bibliographies are under “literature” (“France” has lists about the country, “French Literature” has then intermixed with bellettistic bibliographies). Besterman also often reports the total number their entries. There are also bibliographies that number their entries.
want them, so astute foreign publishers usually find ways to get their works listed. Their entries are likely to be sufficient for booktrade use in selling copies, if not for library use is providing access for readers.

Most government-sponsored national bibliographies are compiled with help from libraries, but with inadequate and changeable funding. Some publishers do not trust their national governments, so that titles of special or limited interest become part of the national record only as later scholars and advocates uncover them. National copyright offices may compile the list and identify works either registered (but sometimes never issued), or revised before being issued or occasionally deposited some years after first publication. Some lists compiled in a national library identify only those copies selected for its collections, well catalogued but limited to titles that readers are likely to ask for. Some current national bibliographies also cite writings about the nation and by its authors, published anywhere: to update Iwinski they must be excluded. Some books have joint imprints in two countries – foreign imprints that name two cities or have replaced title pages or even with stamped or paste-over labels, i.e., what descriptive bibliographers call reissues.

Precise publication years are sometimes less precise than they appear. In 1926, Jan Muszkowski reported that some national bibliographies included less than a third, at worst a thirtieth of the nation’s copyright totals. Production of the individual books may have been ahead of schedule or delayed. Works with imprints dated 1921 may be copyright or listed for 1920 (with Christmas markets in mind), or some years later (having been sent in late, or dumped into a cataloguing backlog). Different publishers, meanwhile, have different ideas of what the “date of publication” really means.

Subject, genre, and author lists, finding aids, library catalogues, copyright ledgers, obscure transcripts, and antiquarian booksellers’ lists all add to the

30 “Sur la statistique internationale des imprimés,” was issued in the Congrès international des bibliothécaires et des amis du livre, Prague, 1926, Tome II, Mémoires (Prague, 1929), pp. 412–22; also Tome I, Procès-verbaux, pp. 77–78. Perhaps because of his paper, it is interesting to note, a resolution was drawn up, proposing a committee sponsored by the International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation and the International Institute of Bibliography. The mandate was (1) to look at the registration and reporting practices of systems around the world, for purposes of compiling more exact statistics; (2) to work out rules, in collaboration with the International Institute of Statistics; (3) to propose a better reporting system, for the approval of the International Congress of Librarians and Bibliophiles; and (4) to prepare a multilingual dictionary of terminology for use with current book statistics. The International Congress of Librarians and Bibliophiles was soon dissolved, to become the International Federation of Library Associations. At this time all four proposals were forgotten.
totals. Also important are the roughly 13 million titles in the National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints, about a quarter of which are not in WorldCat as of recently.\footnote{Jeffrey Beall and Karen Kafadar reported on “The Proportion of NUC Pre-56 Titles Represented in OCLC WorldCat,” College & Research Libraries 66 (2005), 431–35. Their totals are generally confirmed in several later reports by Christine DeZelar-Tiedman.} Bibliographic utilities can also be programmed to harvest citations; a few examples are cited below, one hopes more will be done. By searching and comparing, the totals can be refined and the totals raised, however slightly.

**Statistics.**\footnote{Gretchen Whitney surveys “The Unesco Book Production Statistics,” Book Research Quarterly, vol. 5, no. 4 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 12–29 and 44–75; see also her essay in Philip G. Altbach and Edith S. Hoshino, International Book Publishing (Garland, 1995), pp. 163–86, and other studies. Sigfred Taube’s older The Book Trade of the World (Bowker, 1972) also includes totals.} National booktrade associations began counting their output in the nineteenth century. As international commerce flourished, the groups studied each other’s totals. By 1937 the reports were being coordinated through the League of Nations, from the 1950s on through the United Nations and UNESCO. By the late 1970s standardized reporting practices were in place. International cultural cooperation inspires great diligence in the cause of uniformity, so that the notes in the Yearbooks that explain the qualifications often take up nearly as much space as the totals.

The reporting, however, is uneven. Some nations report only occasionally, and even nations with well-organized book trades have gaps. Unusually high totals following gaps may suggest that several years are being covered. National totals are still national, not local. Even open societies have illegal and dissenting publications, uncounted because they are unlisted and meant to be seen only by a chosen audience. The reports may be imperfect, but the totals are still an invaluable perspective on the bibliographical activity.

**Expertise.** Statistics rarely explain what is being counted, and bibliographies tell us what is omitted only when their decisions are based on evidence they know about. Iwinski called on the expert advice of respected scholars, among them Karl Dziatzko for Germany, M.F.A.G. Campbell for Holland, and Hans Ostenfeld Lange for Denmark. When in doubt, he called on his own statistical expertise and drew mathematical growth curves.

The totals below extend through the year 2000, convenient in that it avoids many of the contradictory ambiguities that electronic texts imply. The pre-1900
totals are based mostly on bibliographies, those for the twentieth century on statistical reports. The great challenge for the former has been one of estimating totals based on landmarks lists that are out-of-date and incomplete, for the latter of asking what statistical reports do and do not tell us.

Conventional wisdom sees three ages of bibliography: an “incunabula era” of fastidious completeness; “dark ages,” usually beginning in 1501, with adequate coverage of great authors, important genres, and national and local heritages but modest or no coverage of many literatures; and a “modern era” with attempts to provide access to everything. Nation by nation, region by region, the character and magnitude of the bibliographical record is as follows:

The sequence below is adapted from Proctor order (see p. 000), thus:

Incunabula. The Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue at the British Library now claims just under 30,000 titles. Dachs and Schmidt come in with a slightly lower total of 26,365. Scholars, as they study fragments and variants, use new citations as the easiest way to report their findings. Earlier, Antonio Serna Santender (Dictionnaire bibliographique choisi du 15. siècle, 1805) had estimated a total of 15,000. (He also assured his readers that only about 1,500 of these were worthy of the attention of the curious, and of a place of respect in libraries). Gabriel Peignot (Traité du choix du livres, 1817) pushed the total down to 13,000. The totals rose as new titles were discovered. (New discoveries always push the totals higher, and the timing of the discoveries is in itself a topic of interest. New titles usually make the totals more nuanced, as the new copies may turn out to be duplicated sections or fragments of other copies, often with revisions that looked minor to readers in their day but are exciting to scholars today.)

The dark ages begin in 1501. Few literatures are blessed by the scholarship that incunabula have stimulated. General totals for the “post-incunabula” era

need to be very rough. The Index aureliensis (Heitz, 1965– ) was planned to cover all sixteenth-century books, but it foundered around 1970., but on the basis of what appeared, it likely would have included about 400,000 entries. The projected USTC (Saint Andrews Universal Short Title Catalogue) is estimated to include eventually about 350,000 entries for extant copies through 1601.

**The German Sprachbereich.**34 The German book world has been dispersed ever since Gutenberg’s apprentices decided to set out on their own. There was no unified nation until 1871, but there was a common language, as well as a relatively literate citizenry and book fairs to unify the booktrade. Germany was a Sprachbereich, a bibliographical as well as a linguistic hegemony that included Austria and much of Switzerland. German books dominated central Europe.

Iwinski’s early German totals – 20,000 fifteenth-century, 100,000 sixteenth, 200,000 seventeenth, and 500,000 eighteenth – come from the top of the venerable head of Karl Dziatzko. But the head knew what it was doing. He knew his sources, e.g., how useful but incomplete the Messkataloge (1564–1860) are. “VD-16” has close to 100,000 sixteenth century titles, while “VD-17” will likely have twice as many for the seventeenth; but they cover holdings for only a handful of the largest German libraries are covered, and ephemera is excluded. Doubling the totals for our statistical purposes is no insult to these monuments.

<Pages 218-256 under revision. Contact the author for details>

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34 The Geschichte der Deutschen Buchhandels (1886–1908) of Friedrich Kapp and J. Goldfriedrich is not superseded as a general account. Michael Batts’s Bibliography of German Literature (Peter Lang, 1978) discusses the record that modern scholars use. The Handbuch deutscher historischer Buchbestände (1997-) organized by Bernhard Fabian, is invaluable in bibliographical source work. Georg Panzer’s venerable Annalen der ältern deutschen Litteratur (1788–1805), the first major attempt at a perspective on the chronology, and still waiting for a successor after two centuries.

The “VD-16” and “VD-17” series are the Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts (1983-) and des XVII. Jahrhunderts (online); the “GV” is the Gesamtverzeichnis der deutschsprachigen Schrifttums, in two series, one for 1700-1910, another for 1911-1965 (K.G. Saur, 1979-87 and 1976-81), which interfiles photocopied entries from the major current lists.
