

Spread of the Gutenberg press

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_spread_of_the_printing_press)

Germany

Modern stamp commemorating the Gutenberg Bible, the first major European work printed by mechanical movable type.

Gutenberg's first major print work was the 42-line Bible in Latin, printed probably between 1452 and 1454 in the German city of Mainz. After Gutenberg lost a lawsuit against his investor Johann Fust, Fust put Gutenberg's employee Peter Schöffer in charge of the print shop. Thereupon Gutenberg established a new one with the financial backing of another money lender. With Gutenberg's monopoly revoked, and the technology no longer secret, printing spread throughout Germany and beyond, diffused first by emigrating German printers, but soon also by foreign apprentices.

Europe

In rapid succession, printing presses were set up in Central and Western Europe. Major towns, in particular, functioned as centers of diffusion (Cologne 1466, Rome 1467, Venice 1469, Paris 1470, Kraków 1473, London 1477). In 1481, barely 30 years after the publication of the 42-line Bible, the small Netherlands already featured printing shops in 21 cities and towns, while Italy and Germany each had shops in about 40 towns at that time. According to one estimate, "by 1500, 1000 printing presses were in operation throughout Western Europe and had produced 8 million books" and during the 1550s there were "three hundred or more" printers and booksellers in Geneva alone. The output was in the order of twenty million volumes and rose in the sixteenth century tenfold to between 150 and 200 million copies.[4] Germany and Italy were considered the two main centres of printing in terms of quantity and quality.

Rest of the world

The near-simultaneous discovery of sea routes to the West (Christopher Columbus, 1492) and East (Vasco da Gama, 1498) and the subsequent establishment of trade links greatly facilitated the global spread of Gutenberg-style printing. Traders, colonists, but perhaps most importantly, missionaries exported printing presses to the new European oversea domains, setting up new print shops and distributing printing material. In the Americas, the first extra-European print shop was founded in Mexico City in 1544 (1539?), and soon after Jesuits started operating the first printing press in Asia (Goa, 1556).

For a long time, however, movable type printing remained mainly the business of Europeans working from within the confines of their colonies. According to Suraiya Faroqhi, lack of interest and religious reasons were among the reasons for the slow adoption of the printing press outside Europe: Thus, the printing of Arabic, after encountering strong opposition by Muslim legal scholars and the manuscript scribes, remained prohibited in the Ottoman empire between 1483 and 1729, initially even on penalty of death, while some movable Arabic type printing was done by Pope Julius II (1503–1512) for distribution among Middle Eastern Christians, and the oldest Qur'an printed with movable type was produced in Venice in 1537/1538 for the Ottoman market.

Hebrew texts and presses were imported across the Middle East - as early as 1493 - Constantinople, Fez (1516) and surviving texts from circa 1577 Safed (modern Israel) have been discovered. Disquiet about the publication of religious texts in this way may have dampened down their production. [8]

In India, reports are that Jesuits "presented a polyglot Bible to the Emperor Akbar in 1580 but did not succeed in arousing much curiosity." But also practical reasons seem to have played a role. The English East India Company, for example, brought a printer to Surat in 1675, but was not able to cast type in Indian scripts, so the venture failed.

North America saw the adoption by the Cherokee Indian Elias Boudinot who published the tribe's first newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, from 1828, partly in the Cherokee language, using the Cherokee script recently invented by his compatriot Sequoyah.

In the 19th century, the arrival of the Gutenberg-style press to the shores of Tahiti (1818), Hawaii (1821) and other Pacific islands, marked the end of a global diffusion process which had begun almost 400 years earlier. At the same time, the "old style" press (as the Gutenberg model came to be termed in the 19th century), was already in the process of being displaced by industrial machines like the steam powered press (1812) and the rotary press (1833), which radically departed from Gutenberg's design, but were still of the same development line.