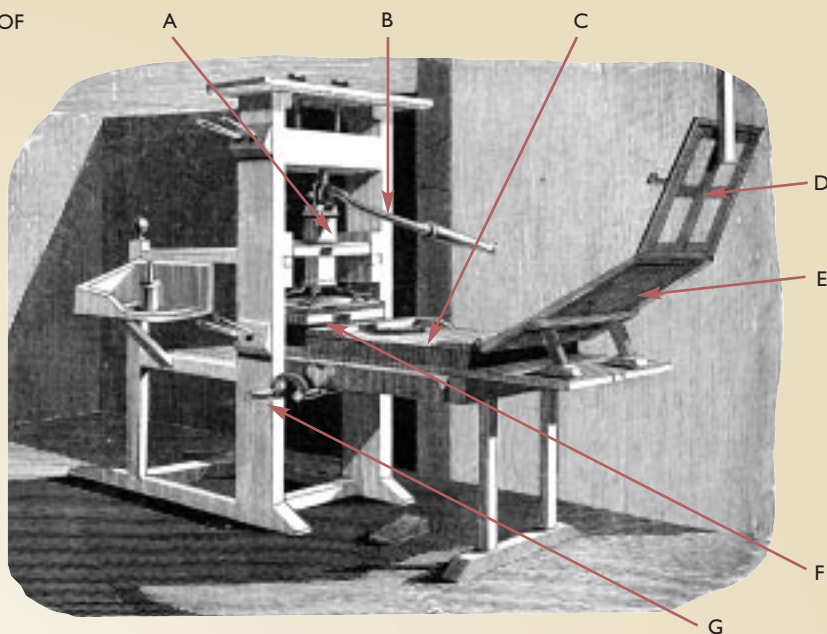


TYPICAL HAND PRESS OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

- (A) Screw, enclosed in casing
- (B) Handle or lever
- (C) Bed, on which the type is laid
- (D) Frisket
- (E) Tympan
- (F) Platen
- (G) Rounce, controlling the movement of the bed

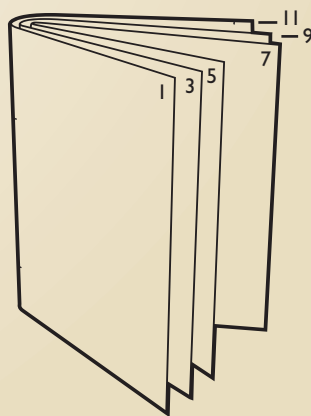


Printing a single sheet required nine separate operations. First, the dabbers or pelt balls (used in pairs) were covered with the sticky printer's ink, which was then applied to the surface of the type. A dampened sheet of paper was placed on the tympan, and frisket, paper, and tympan were folded over onto the type. The bed was then run under the platen, which was forced down on the paper by tightening the screw. Finally, the platen was lifted, the bed was pulled back, the tympan and frisket raised, and the sheet pulled clear. When all the sheets had been printed on one side, the process was repeated on the other side with a new setting of type, while the paper was still damp.

Paper was being manufactured from rags in England in the 15th century, and in Scotland from 1590—before that, Scottish books were printed on paper imported from the Continent. The white cotton rags were sorted, cleaned, boiled, beaten into a pulp, and mixed with water. The resulting liquid was forced through a fine sieve, leaving the fibres on its surface, which was jogged to allow them to interlock. The individual sheets were then pressed, hung up to dry, and treated to give them a surface.

Right: Section of three sheets of folio, gathered to make twelve pages.

For binding, sheets taken from the press were folded once to make four pages (two leaves) folio size (fol. or 2o), twice for eight pages (four leaves) in quarto (4to or 4o), and three times for sixteen pages (eight leaves) in octavo (8vo or 8o). The sections were gathered, and then sewn together and into the casing (which might be of parchment, vellum, or leather), with the leaves trimmed or left uncut. Often the sections were simply stitched together with no cover, or were subsequently bound to the owner's taste.



In England, between 1586 and about 1640 printing was restricted by law to London, with one press each in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and was undertaken outside these places only clandestinely. In Scotland, during much the same period, new presses were set up in Stirling, Aberdeen, Glasgow, and (in 1651) Leith, joining those already established in Edinburgh and St Andrews.