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Purposes of Descriptive Bibliography, with Some Remarks on Methods

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On the principles which lie behind any form of scholarly endeavour depend the methods. Common experience shows that no discussion is more fruitless than that which is concerned with methods when there have not first been clearly outlined into areas of agreement and of disagreement those purposes which the methods are supposed to implement. Since I propose to deliver a few comments on methods, specifically on the methods I have adopted for the investigation and the writing-up of a descriptive bibliography of Restoration drama, some generalizations about purposes had better be introduced.

Among the interested persons who consult a descriptive bibliography, three major categories may be discerned.

1. Booksellers, private collectors, and librarians need the specialized information of a bibliography to aid them in their joint task of accurately collecting for preservation the printed records of our civilization.

2. The analysis and ordering of books in a descriptive bibliography is of assistance to all persons, whether literary or textual critics, who make direct use of the books concerned. However, there are indirect users, who may come to the descriptions in lieu of the books themselves for information about contents and physical characteristics, and even for the circumstances and forms of publication.

3. General bibliographical students may be greatly assisted by the detailed recording of a considerable quantity of bibliographical data.

My purpose in devoting about ten years to compiling a descriptive bibliography of the Restoration drama to 1700 is briefly stated: it is, within all practicable limits, to offer the maximum amount of information to all three groups, maintaining such a balance as will, I hope, over and above this specific usefulness create an independent work of scholarship in its own right. The methods I am employing both for the original investigation of the books, and then for the subsequent recording in descriptive form of their characteristics, have been designed with this ultimate independent aim in

[1] Read before the Bibliographical Society on 18 November 1952.

view, but also, on a more specific plane, to maintain a desirable balance in treating the demands of the users. I should say with some emphasis, however, that in my opinion a balanced method of bibliographical description, which will adequately treat the needs of the three major groups concerned, cannot be achieved by concessions and compromises. I take it as a principle that it is wrong to expect all parts of a bibliographical account of a book to be of identical use to each of the three main groups of ultimate consumers. And I believe that any bibliographer who tries to make his descriptions be all things to all men will end by effectively cancelling out the positive virtues of his work.

Let us be plain about this matter. Most users of a descriptive bibliography will come to it only for their own specific purposes. Some may have no comprehension of the requirements of different classes of scholars; others' sympathy may prove limited when different requirements seem to come in conflict with their own. This is understandable and inevitable. There would be no harm in it if the situation did not create pressure groups which tend to operate powerfully on bibliographical thinking. Let me illustrate. I hold that bibliography is properly an advanced form of independent scholarship,[1] which is not necessarily subsidiary to other forms; and as such that it has as much right to express itself in its own technical terms as any other independent form of advanced scholarship. I have every sympathy with the literary student, and every wish to encourage him to understand and to make use of bibliographical description; but if we are to confine bibliography and its expression, as I have seen it suggested,[2] to the level of a university student who has listened to eight lectures on the subject and passed a satisfactory examination, then I must say in all candour that I can see no future for bibliography as a scholarly discipline, dependent or independent. But I have expressed myself at such length elsewhere on this subject that it would be tedious to repeat the arguments here, and especially before a bibliographical society. The nub of the matter is, surely, that if one has not had the training to understand moderately advanced bibliographical expression, then one has not had the training to understand the basic information purveyed, no matter how it is expressed. The technical part of a bibliographical description, therefore, is of no interest to the literary student until he understands enough to make use of it. There are plenty of other matters in the description which he will find to his purpose, however; and he should be satisfied with those until he reads and understands his McKerrow and Greg, and comes to some

[1] At the risk of pressing an unpopular point of view I had better make it clear that throughout this paper I depend upon the tacit thesis that bibliography is indeed a form of scholarship and that it is essentially an independent form, despite the fact that in certain of its branches, such as descriptive and textual bibliography, it is of direct service to other disciplines of scholarship. Much still remains to be said, but I have glanced at the subject in 'Some Relations of Bibliography to Editorial Problems', *Studies in Bibliography*, iii (1950), 137–62; and recently in more detail, in 'Bibliography, Pure Bibliography, and Literary Studies', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, xlvi (1952), 186–208, I have tried to explore some of its implications.

[2] *Modern Language Notes*, lxvi (1951), 569.

comprehension of the printing process and of the methods that have been adopted for describing analytically its results in the form of a book. This applies not only to the literary student but to every diverse member of perhaps the most important pressure group the bibliographer has to resist, a group which in the last analysis is attempting to prevent him from becoming an independent scholar by the insistence that he must address himself to the lowest common denominator of his readers.

Within the camp, however, there is also a strong opposition between two points of view, each of which would mould bibliography in its own image. I can illustrate again from discussions which, being directed at some of my own work,[1] have the advantage for our purposes of a common focus, however dubious. A distinguished textual critic and scholar for whom I have a warm admiration writes that in the principles and rigorous methods I have advocated for bibliographical description, I do not always 'remember that the new method of bibliographical investigation—however fascinating to those studying the ways of printers and publishers or to certain collectors and booksellers—will be useful to the student of literature only in so far as it is of assistance in solving problems connected with the transmission of the text. Analytical bibliography has proved its value to the textual critic and the editor: but it must continue to remain adaptable to their varied requirements, and its methods of description must be those that will best serve their purpose.'[2]

On the other side, the cudgels are taken up by a distinguished bookman who has always been very active in explaining the interests of collectors and of booksellers and, to our profit, in following the ways of publishers and readers:

> Professor Bowers's thesis is that 'if bibliography of machine-printed books is to take its place in scholarship beside the best work devoted to older books, it must be conceived and executed for scholarly purposes'. This is unexceptionable; but he sometimes reacts from 'the excesses of undiscriminating commercialism' to a position in which it almost seems that collectors and their interests are outside the pale of scholarship. Scholarship, in this context, surely does not end with the mere text: it embraces book-structure, publishing practice, copyright regulations and the remuneration of authorship, distribution methods and reading habits. And these can sometimes be illuminated by bibliographical evidence of a kind which gets short shrift from Professor Bowers.[3]

It is a little hard, perhaps, to be simultaneously accused of paying too little and too much attention to text, and too much and too little to publishing history in its various manifestations. I should certainly feel more acutely conscious of serious deficiencies in my methodology for bibliographical

[1] *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949).
[2] H. J. Davis, in *R.E.S.*, New Ser., iii (1952), 297.
[3] John Carter, 'Some Bibliographical Agenda', in *Nineteenth Century English Books* (University of Illinois, 1952), p. 80.

description if it did not seem that, apparently being in the middle, I must accept fire from port as well as from starboard. I have quoted from these divergent opinions not from any sense of virtue, however, or in any hopeful belief that they might cancel each other out, but rather to illustrate the strength of opposing claims to the main services of descriptive bibliography, and the difficulty, seemingly, of satisfying one without alarming the other. In fact, I myself believe that each has expressed a legitimate aspiration and has erred only in the ardour of statement of his own particular interests without a full understanding of the case for the other side.[1] In my own view, publishing history and literary history are often too closely connected to have searching inquiries into the publication background dismissed as the sport of collectors and booksellers. I grant that to a serious literary student some manifestations of an exclusive interest in publication problems may seen rather trivial, as in earnest discussions of the priority of this or that state of the binding. But evidence that can be evolved from such matters can sometimes be applied to the sheets and may thus be of service in helping to reveal concealed impressions of a book, by this means throwing considerable light on the author's popularity with his public. I should not wish, however, to defend publishing history only as it may have direct literary implications. It is a legitimate field for inquiry in its own right. But legitimate as it is, the fact that it is most often pursued apart from literary study in a period of printing when the text is less affected than with earlier books by publication problems should not, I think, lead to dismissal of the heart of our interest in any book, as 'mere text'. Definitely, both these interests are legitimate and must be served in a descriptive bibliography. I suggest, however, that the clash of interests would be materially simplified if it were clearly recognized by both sides that much of what they are demanding cannot be contained in the formal bibliographical description itself, which places on record

[1] Since this matter will be taken up from time to time, no full discussion need be given here. I should perhaps say, however, that being a pedagogue, like Professor Davis, I share his esteem for text and hold in highest estimation that form of bibliography which is intended to illuminate textual problems. On the other hand, as I have tried to explain in my paper on 'Bibliography, Pure Bibliography, and Literary Studies', referred to above, I am unwilling to see analytical bibliography limited only to a direct application to textual problems. I must say, however, that I have not observed, at least as common experience, any great fascination with analytical bibliography among collectors and booksellers, as he suggests. If so, the organs devoted exclusively to their special interests have effectively concealed the fact. Mr. Carter's strictures on my overly narrow concept of scholarship are perhaps just, even though I had thought to have given the evidence of which he speaks somewhat longer shrift than he allows me. Perhaps it is proper to define scholarship more by method than by subjects suitable for its attention and to take our chance on ending with angels dancing on the point of a pin. A difficulty is, if in my academic provincialism I do not exaggerate, that persons trained in scholarly method are most often actively associated with the universities. This being so, they come under the influence of university authorities in regard to the direction of their research and its dissemination in teaching; and as a general academic discipline these authorities take a conservative view about the close study of publishing history. The difficulty seems to be, then, to find the persons sufficiently trained in method who can be professionally interested in such investigation, and who can thus—to reverse the adage—drive out the bad money.

the physical characteristics of the sheets of a book and their contents. Rather, both are in part confusing the requirements and methods of this description with what is in fact ancillary to the description proper; that is, the information contained in illustrative notes on collateral as well as on analytical material. My own view is that the basic form of a standard bibliographical description that a careful bibliographer would contrive supplies both parties indifferently with close to the maximum information which either wants from the details of the description itself. The interpretation of these details and the summoning up of allied evidence is another matter.

The printed description of a book in a bibliography is like the visible tip of an iceberg, the submerged four-fifths corresponding to the unseen investigation which underlies and supports the description. To a certain degree—as I shall try to bring out when I come to the question of identifying copies from a description—the form of the description is often in part dictated, or at least should be dictated, by the nature and extent of the research. By this I mean that if the bibliographer has been deficient in the number of copies he has examined, or in his method of examination, then clearly a reader will feel safer with a fully detailed description than with a condensed one which lacks sufficient data to identify and isolate forms of the book that the bibliographer may readily have overlooked. On the other hand, if both in extent and in method the bibliographer has emphasized range and exactness, some condensation in description may safely be allowed if this is confined to such detail which has as its chief purpose the identification of unrecorded forms of the book.

Since in some respects my descriptions of the plays will be condensed, I have tried to examine all copies in about thirty collections in the United States and in England. Many of these plays being of no great rarity, and some libraries possessing duplicates, I shall have seen an average of twenty to thirty copies of many editions, and for the scarcer items at least all the copies recorded which are not in private hands.[1] I do not list any copy which I have not personally examined either by direct handling or on microfilm. By the generosity of my university and of the Richmond Area University Centre, I possess and travel with a complete microfilm of every edition and issue of the plays with which I am concerned, these films serving as a series of control copies. When I go to a library to record its collection, I utilize its Recordak projector, or else a portable projector of my own which can be set up anywhere and used in daylight. Every copy of every play which I record is compared page by page against my control microfilm by checking its salient typographical features to ensure that the typesetting of each page is the same as in my control and that it is printed from the same imposition. I also use additional microfilm in some quantities,

[1] Except when books are of great rarity the bibliographer is perhaps best advised to confine his records to those copies which are in a place of permanent deposit and therefore always available for scholarly research.

since I have had filmed for deposit in my university's library the entire collection of every important United States library to which it was impossible for me to travel, in cases where loan of books was prohibited by the terms of foundation or by a narrow application of the principle of 'the full reading room'.

This method of comparison is not only, curiously, faster than the conventional way of comparing copies against one's notes, but it is to the highest degree more accurate.[1] I need hardly say that in this process I have been able to discover reimpositions, partial resettings, new closely reprinted editions, and miscellaneous variants to an astonishing number and to an extent which, according to my experience, would have proved impossible by any other method.[2] Not the least valuable, I estimate, has been my ability to detect the making up of copies from sheets or leaves of various editions and thus to warn my readers where they are and of what they are composed. Conversely, if no record to this effect is found in my listing of the copies, the user of any recorded copy can be assured that it is the assigned edition for every leaf. I believe this method of comparison against a constant control is good scientific bibliography and is, in fact, the only safe method to employ.[3] I can guarantee that it is practicable and indeed time-saving. From

[1] There is, of course, nothing esoteric about this method: all it does is to reproduce the conditions to infinity of a duplicate set of copies in one library, which under any system a bibliographer would carefully compare page by page. As for speed, with practice one learns quickly to flick one's eye down the page, comparing the copy in one's hand against the film-image for identical alignment and composition of headline in relation to the type-page, one or two prominent typographical peculiarities in the type-page itself including alignments, and the alignment of any signatures. Different impositions are most readily detected by comparing the relation of the running-title or of the headline pagination to the type-page. The typography and alignment of running-titles may thus be seen at a glance rather than painfully disentangled from a series of notes and drawings, page by page. One may compare two title-pages in this manner, also, faster than one can read and collate against notes. Accuracy resides not only in the detection of untranscribable matters but also in relation to many matters of concern to the investigation and writing-up. For example, except for notes on variants it would be possible not to write up descriptions until one is ready for the press, since all the essential facts are stored on film. This saves time, since as comparisons progress one must often modify considerably an early written description, and then retype it for press. Moreover, it is almost inevitable that as one's investigations continue, early conceived methods of description may require modification on experience. It is very difficult to be consistent in revising one's notes and descriptions to take account of a newly developed change in method; and often when one can see copies only in libraries a considerable amount of rechecking is necessary. But when one has every edition and issue on film, one has a constant and convenient check whenever desired. Finally, film enables one to check one's final description back against the originals without difficulty; and even to read proof against the originals without stirring from one's own study. The fearful uncertainty that often assails a bibliographer relying on notes and title-page photostats as to his accuracy can never trouble the possessor of a library on film.

[2] A bibliographer who has only a series of notes and photostats of title-pages is helpless to detect many such variants unless he is so fortunate as to find them in duplicate copies in the same library. With a film control copy they are always detectable, and immediate collation of the text can be engaged in for any purpose. For example, so far as I know at present, the fact that sheet F in part 2 of D'Urfey's *Massaniello*, 1699, exists in two settings could not be discovered from duplicate holdings—and certainly not from notes.

[3] It is, of course, expensive and on any really large scale cannot be engaged in without subvention. Yet when one surveys the history of scholarship and sees the number of faulty

my experience with the method as applied to books of no great rarity, I think I can state that though it is not impossible that an unknown edition of a recorded Restoration play-title may be turned up somewhere after the bibliography is published, the odds against this happening decrease materially with every copy over a dozen or so that one can examine; and I have set twenty to thirty as my ideal when they are available. I do believe, however, that I can guarantee that in the copies I list as examined there will not be hidden any unrecognized edition, impression, or issue, and I hope no variant state of the kinds that I record.

The accuracy of investigation which this method promotes has, I believe, important implications. The first affects the form of the description, and the second the amount of information which can be provided for the users of the bibliography. As concerns the form, there are three specific matters to which it is worth calling attention. First, although my description of the earliest edition and its issues is relatively full, the fullness and precision, however useful for the purpose, are not aimed primarily at offering identifying details to enable the reader to detect editions which were unknown to me. However, since the variant states of parts of the book may be more numerous than I shall have had opportunity to view and record,[1] the possible detection of such variants from my description has carried some weight. Secondly, the opportunity to make a far-reaching and minute examination has helped to solve one of the most vexing problems in descriptive bibliography, the question of what form to give the descriptions of editions after the first. From a strictly bibliographical point of view, which considers all books only as they are tangible objects, the twentieth edition is just as interesting and even as important as the first, since it is a part of the total publishing and

publications on important subjects which by the very fact of their existence inhibit a fresh attempt with proper methods and resources, a question arises over the ethics of pre-empting a major bibliographical subject unless one has assurance of financial grants sufficient to permit one to adopt a method which can lead to definitive results. Discussion of the place of money in producing scholarship is a more ticklish subject in the arts than in the sciences, but we shall gain nothing by looking daintily the other way whenever the subject is broached. My scientist friends are by no means so diffident. Moreover, it would seem that conditions in the arts are already in process of change for this generation, and I suspect will accelerate for the next. Whether we like it or not, the attack of scholarship on large-scale projects these days can be made only from well-financed bases. Whether such resources are available will more and more in the future, I am afraid, dictate the subject (since treatment ought not to be affected if it proposes to be scholarly) to which one can most fruitfully devote oneself. I am happy to be informed that at least the newer British universities as a general rule, like their American counterparts, recognize the need to assist with the expenses for research in the humanities on which members of their staffs are engaged.

[1] A tolerable number of variant states which have analytical or textual interest are for some plays known to me in only a single copy. The rewritten text in sheet H of Dryden's *Albion and Albanius*, 1685, is a good example; the important cancellandum in the preliminaries of his *King Arthur*, 1691, is another. A third concerns a most interesting series of reimpositions in the last of the 1696 editions of *The Indian Emperour* made to avoid having to throw away a very small quantity of misprinted sheets. I have perhaps half a dozen or more similar examples in my notes. Many such variants must have been produced in relatively small numbers and hence may not turn up among copies seen in even a scrupulously wide range of examination.

textual history of the author, without regard for the authority contained in the text. The textual critic, concerned only with these questions of authority, will have small opinion of this twentieth edition and would view an elaborate description of it as quite out of proportion. Yet for the student of publishing history in general, or of the specific publishing and literary history of this author in particular, the form taken by a late edition may be just as significant as that of an earlier.

However, I have followed the general custom of giving a less detailed description of the form of a book in editions after the first, and have done so with more confidence because my own examination of these late editions has been just as scrupulous and wide as for textually more important editions. Hence elaborateness is less needed for reasons of identification; and I have been able to refer back to the detailed description of the first edition, usually in a simplified manner, for whatever description was necessary to help bring an absent book before the mind's eye.

The third way in which my method of investigation has affected the form of the description is in lending an authority to quasi-facsimile transcription, a feature of description which it is becoming increasingly fashionable to attack. I wish I had more opportunity to inquire into this matter, for it is one of considerable importance. So far as I can see the basis for the attack on quasi-facsimile transcription, it represents the feeling that such transcription provides an imperfect means for identification. The argument needs examination. Before books can be used, they must be acquired. They can be systematically acquired only when differentiated. The demands of the acquirer on the bibliographer, therefore, fall into two parts as concern identification. First, the bibliographer must by his own investigation identify all different forms of the book. Depending upon the scholarly minuteness of his study, he should not only differentiate each edition, but within each edition the one or more impressions which comprise the edition; then within each impression the one or more identified issues; and finally, within each issue, the variant states conventionally found worthy of mention.[1] Not all acquirers need such a complete breakdown of the total information, but each will need some of it. Ordinarily the acquirer is not interested in the bibliographical processes by which this family tree of identification and differentiation has been constructed, or with the textual or publishing history associated with it. All that is required is that a differentiation be made between the major forms of the book, and suitable information be given of

[1] Ordinarily we may expect a bibliographer, at a minimum, to record variants to any feature of the book which he lists or transcribes. In the first category would certainly come variants within the collational formula for a book, including anything to do with the register of the signatures or the numbering or the pages. A transcript is usually made of the title-page, frequently of the head-title and running-titles, and sometimes of the headings to parts of the book including such information as inscriptions and subscriptions. We cannot expect the bibliographer to record all proof corrections within the text proper made in press, for he would have no means of determining these short of full textual collation except for such as accidentally call themselves to his attention.

what constitutes minor forms. The second demand is that the points of difference in each form of the book be so recorded as to enable the acquirer to identify any copy in his hand as definitely from a certain edition, impression, and issue—and occasionally state—of the book described. Nothing else concerns such a consultant but ascertaining this single fact. Identification pure and simple.

The important, indubitable fact that descriptive bibliographies are of major service to systematic acquisition of books by collectors and libraries has led, in my opinion, to some fallacious thinking about the form that description should take, by giving undue prominence and false complexity to quite simple problems of identification. For example, some bibliographical theorists are so concerned with the problem of identification that they believe ordinary methods of description cannot ensure sufficient accuracy; and hence, whenever practicable, photographic reproductions of title-pages should replace the familiar compromise represented by quasi-facsimile transcription.[1]

Under certain conditions I have no quarrel with this school, although the most recent writer in its favour has given me one by wrenching out of context to relate to photography a sentence from my book which was written to apply specifically to the superiority of quasi-facsimile to simplified transcription, photographic facsimile excluded. Nevertheless, this facsimile principle is so very important—since if adopted it would change the face of every descriptive bibliography—that it is worth considering in some detail. In my opinion photographic facsimiles of title-pages may be useful supplements to transcription, but they are no such cure-alls that we can set up their utilization as a necessary or even as a generally desirable principle. As I see it, the theory on which they are advocated has a major fallacy. First, let me emphasize that the positive identification which they are supposed to give is not to assist the user of the bibliography to identify his copy as belonging to one of two or more known and identified editions. This simple identification can be managed much more conveniently and accurately by standard descriptive methods.[2] Please notice that what is in question is the whole book,

[1] This view was recently argued in some detail by Philip Gaskell, in a letter printed in *The Library*, 5th series, vii (1952), 135–7.

[2] It will often happen that the typesetting of a reprint is so close that a very careful and time-consuming examination must be made to separate the two title-pages. Very often, some small point, but one easily overlooked, can be emphasized in a transcription to serve instantly as the point of separation between two identified and described titles. Thus the two 1669 editions of Dryden's *Secret-Love* are perhaps most quickly distinguished in their titles by whether or not *Maiden-Queen* begins with a display or a regular-fount *M*. One of the three 1670 editions of *The Indian Emperour* has its title most quickly identified by whether the spelling is *Emperor*. When points like these are properly emphasized by special notation in a transcribed title, the reader can make his identification faster than by poring over two greatly similar titles in search of identifying details. However, a reader seeking the fastest and surest method of identifying any given copy is better advised to skip the title-page and to check off certain invariable points that should be listed within a book. For example, if he held a copy of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, the 1687 edition, with imprint so shaved as to destroy the date, this edition could be most readily distinguished from the 1683, of which it is a close reprint, by looking at the running-titles.

and not just the title-page as the sole source of identification. That there has indeed been some confusion about precisely what it is that is being identified by a photograph is in my opinion due to the curious fallacy that the title-page is the most important single feature of identification that exists for a book. Thus, it is argued tacitly, if we photograph the title-page we have in some major substance identified the book.

I feel that this is a rather naïve point of view. Nothing is more detachable than a title-leaf. The majority of imperfect copies of plays I have encountered, for example, have lacked this leaf and sometimes the whole of the preliminaries. Moreover, it is not unknown that the title-leaf alone, or the whole of the first preliminary gathering (sometimes including one or more text gatherings for good measure) can be transferred from an imperfect copy of an early edition to make up a superficially perfect example though chiefly composed of sheets of a later edition. If we place such confidence in our ability to identify books by their title-pages that we fail to describe other matters in the more important body of the book, we are misleading a reader by providing him with insufficient information to identify an imperfect copy lacking the title, or by recording in a bibliography the presence of such and such an edition in a library when in fact it is a dangerous made-up bastard copy.[1] If we are sincere in desiring to record the true details by which to identify books, let us deliberately describe books as if they had no title-leaves, and choose, rather, variants in running-titles,[2] measurements of type-pages,[3] measurements of the gutters between the imposition of the

These are regular throughout the 1683 edition; but a description of the 1687 edition would list the fact that no stop was present after the running-title on CF1, BE2, GH3, and that a plain italic *R* was found, instead of the usual swash, on B3, DF4. Incidentally, these are not only superb identifying points but also very illuminating pieces of information about the press-work for this edition.

[1] It has been very correctly suggested to me that the use of a photograph for the title does not preclude careful description of the body of the book. In theory this is right, but I have not observed it in practice. The question is in part one of emphasis. The employment of unusual 'scientific' means like photographic facsimiles of titles places so much emphasis on this feature as to lead, so far as I have observed, to a false confidence in its efficacy. Indeed, the advocates of facsimile are often those who are foremost in arguing for a reduction of the detail of descriptions in the body of the book—who query, for example, on the grounds of expense, the usefulness of transcribing minute running-title variants, and so on. Even bibliographers who examine collections armed only with a photostat of each title and notes for the body of the book are, I feel, victims of this conventional thinking. Conventional investigative methods would not disclose that a presumed copy of the first edition of Etherege's *Man of Mode*, 1676, held by a great library in this country and sold to it by a famous bookseller in good faith, is in fact composed of the first three sheets of the 1676 edition but thereafter of the second-edition gatherings of 1684. A scholar using this copy in all innocence might be seriously misled in various textual points. If the cult of the title-page persists so strongly among the investigators, we cannot expect a lesser emphasis among the users of bibliographies. The less emphasis a descriptive bibliographer gives to the employment of distinctive means for identifying any single feature of a book, the more he is likely to provide a harmonious method for over-all identification.

[2] Before 1700 running-titles, when present, are perhaps the most valuable single item for identification in a description, only type-page measurement being a serious rival.

[3] Since it lacked running-titles and was a line-for-line and page-for-page reprint of the first

type-pages,[1] but not the tender and variable title-leaf. That the title has assumed so much prominence in bibliographical thinking is in part because it is of course convenient (if one is unaware of its dangers), and because it has sometimes a literary importance[2] and almost always an importance for publishing history.

Since with proper investigative and descriptive methods the identification of known editions of a book can be managed for the benefit of the reader in much simpler and less expensive fashion by ordinary means, what then remains of the argument that the photograph is superior to transcription for the purposes of description? There is something, certainly, to the fact that a picture gives us an image which transcription can only adumbrate. But, essentially, and for any scholarly uses, how important is it to have this precise image of only one feature of the book? I have heard it said, also, that a photographic facsimile is easier reading than a transcription. This I do not understand except for modern brief titles and a reader who is such an amateur that he is not used to the conventions of transcription. But for earlier books, to read in photo-facsimile form—usually rather less satisfactory than the original—lines of small type and uncertain inking which may cause trouble even in the document itself to determine questions of accent, pointing, and spelling, when these can be available in transcription in large-size legible modern type seems to me somewhat old-fashioned, to appropriate a phrase I have heard applied to quasi-facsimile transcription.

The true argument can only be that a photo-facsimile title will identify for the reader a copy of the book in his hand which differs from any that the bibliographer has seen and reproduced.[3] Within certain limits I agree. Mr. Gaskell gives as an instance the 1757 Virgil in two editions, the title-pages of which could not be differentiated in quasi-facsimile transcription. From my knowledge of Restoration plays, I can add half a dozen or so more examples. The third and fourth editions, in 1670, of Dryden's *Indian*

edition, the second edition of the Etherege mentioned above could be distinguished as a made-up copy only by typographical measurements unless one were comparing it against a control copy.

[1] The importance of this measurement for revealing concealed impressions of machine-printed books will be explored in an article in preparation for *Studies in Bibliography*, vi (1953). Mr. John Wyllie, Curator of Rare Books at the University of Virginia Library, has with rare ingenuity developed this method in conjunction with fresh evidence from the process of sewing the sheets.

[2] In fact, the head-title is more likely for early books to reflect any title found on the manuscript. That books like incunabula without title-pages require for identification a more elaborate description than books with title-pages was one of the cardinal points of Madan's theory of degressive bibliography. I am afraid I may have paid lip-service to this theory in the past; but if so, I disown it now, and would prefer to substitute for all books the principle that they should be described as if no title-page were present.

[3] Since the distinction between known and recorded editions, or title typesettings, by no means requires the assistance of the photographic facsimile, the strongest argument in its favour becomes this of recognizing the unknown. I wish to emphasise this matter because I fancy most advocates do not appreciate the precise and narrow basis on which the photo-facsimile for any practical purposes has the advantage.

Emperour and the 1695 editions of Jevon's *Devil of a Wife* come first to mind. But these do not trouble me greatly, for there is more to description than identification, and more to identification than the title-page. Let us look at the two 1670 editions of the *Emperour* with differently set title-pages identical in every transcribable point. Suppose by criminal negligence I had seen and described only the fourth edition and not the third, and a user of my bibliography had a copy of the third in his hand. He would find no difference in my transcription of the title. I transcribe the heading to the first act in my description of the first edition, and thereafter indicate any alterations. The reader ought to see, therefore, that the word 'Country' is spelled differently in the heading for the copy he holds from that which I have indicated for the edition. If I had noted typographical differences in the dating of the dedication, he would also see a difference, but I might not do this. At any rate, when he came to compare the collational formula, he would see that the edition I was describing mispaged the whole inner forme of one sheet, whereas the copy in his hand did not. If this made him suspicious, as well it might, and he was encouraged to measure a typical type-page to compare with my figures, he would see beyond a doubt that he had a different edition in his hand. Heading, pagination formula, type-page measurement—here were three points of difference despite similar title-pages, and in spite of the fact that my bibliography treats more briefly editions after the first which have not been thoroughly recast.

If we were to put all our money on the title-page in descriptive bibliography, and as a result were inclined to reduce our account of the rest of the book, as usually happens, I too should insist on photo-facsimiles of title-pages. But for every example of similar titles not to be differentiated by quasi-facsimile, I know of differentiating points in the body of the book which in any normally full description would show variance. Moreover, for every example of similar titles I know of an instance where a photo-facsimile could be misleading. A typical example is Banks's *Cyrus the Great*, 1696, in which the first three text sheets exist in two different settings, but the two varieties have the identical title-page setting. Two editions of Southerne's *Maids Last Prayer*, 1693, have the same title-page, as do two distinct 'first' editions of Congreve's *Love for Love*, 1695, and three 'first' editions of Ogilby's coronation entertainment of 1661.[1] Until very recently the second edition of Lord Lansdowne's *Heroick Love*, 1698, was not distinguished from the first, in spite of the fact that it ends on sig. K4 instead of L2, since the titles of the two editions are in the same setting of type.

I do not wish to decry unduly the argument for identification, since some small part of my preference for liberal transcription of headings in the first edition stems from a desire to increase the odds in favour of identification of previously unknown forms. But these forms, I believe, are much more

[1] I hope to print soon an analysis of these last two examples, including a fresh survey of the problems of Congreve's *Old Batchelour* and *Mourning Bride*.

likely to consist of variant states of the edition under description than of new and previously unidentified editions which the reader has turned up. And for identifying most of these states, transcription is quite as satisfactory as photography, and is not confined to the title. Since there are various economic as well as mechanical difficulties with photo-facsimile, it is legitimate to inquire how serious in fact is the identification problem before we engage ourselves to considerable expense in the creation of a new requirement for bibliography.[1] In my view the answer lies almost completely with the standards by which the bibliography in question has been performed.[2] If it has been done, as far too often, by the bibliographer merely visiting two or three great libraries and looking through their copies to see if they agree with his notes, then I should favour every mechanical means for identification we can invent, in order to protect the user. Bibliography of this—to me—imprecise and elementary sort should not be excused on grounds of insufficient finances to do better work. The scholars who may be seriously misled by trusting to imperfect results obtained by half-methods will not be inclined, I should think, to accept good intentions alone as justifying the production of an over-ambitious piece of work. Check-lists, the 'bibliographies' of enumeration, may be expected to betray faults; but one would wish descriptive bibliography to be definitive.[3] As I have mentioned, I do not in fact think that proper exactness can be guaranteed in descriptive bibliography unless a control is established for the whole volume, in the form of a private copy, photostats, or the very convenient and relatively cheap microfilm, with which I have had considerable experience.

[1] The expense may be twofold: the reader of the bibliography will be charged a higher price to cover the more expensive process, and the compiler of the bibliography may be required by his publisher to provide the photographs. Expense is not, I believe, a legitimate argument to employ to excuse bad bibliography, as is sometimes done; but the whole process of bibliography is certainly so costly in comparison with other forms of scholarship that each detail must pass some scrutiny for its usefulness and pertinence to the whole.

[2] Under this head should come, of course, questions of the nature of the material. Material scarcely investigated before and tricky by nature may well need more safeguards than commonly surveyed and familiar material. It is possible that in some respects machine-printed books, because of the minuteness of evidence which may obtain for resetting, need photographic helps for identification more than the average hand-printed book, although popular authors in the eighteenth century surely present serious problems. There are certainly times when conditions are such as to put an imposing burden for identification on normal bibliographical description. In such cases it would be absurd not to make full use of mechanical aids.

[3] The difficulties encountered by a bibliographer in his investigations vary, of course, not only with his material and the extent of his field but also with conditions in different countries. I am not qualified to speak of the special difficulties which face British scholars. Some account of problems when working in the United States will be found in my 'Certain Basic Problems in Descriptive Bibliography', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, xlii (1948), 211–28. Distances between collections compose only one of these problems, but a serious one. Even under impossibly ideal conditions, to have made the circuit of the collections in my own country which I am recording would have involved travelling at least 7,000 miles and perhaps two years away from home. Clearly, some travel must be supplemented by the borrowing of books through one's own library and by the extensive use of microfilm.

If then we use proper methods to examine and compare copies in the investigative stage of a descriptive bibliography, it seems to me that the expensive photo-facsimile of a title-page is an unnecessary precaution, and even a confession of weakness, if it is inserted to enable the reader to continue further the bibliographical investigation, which should, of course, have been performed definitively by the original scholar. If this is so, the sole legitimate purpose of the photo-facsimile is to assist the acquirer in identifying an edition which he holds. I am sure this simple matter can be handled much more cheaply by other means so long as we can trust the bibliographer to have performed his researches according to proper scholarly standards. I am not sure that the advocates of photography as a cure-all, or even as a generally desirable thing, have always thought through their position. It would seem that in part they are influenced by the pleasure they receive from looking at a series of title-pages. This is understandable, but aesthetic enjoyment must not be allowed to interfere with methods of bibliographical scholarship when the two do not happen to coincide.[1]

My own specific position is this. I should think rather highly in most respects of a bibliography employing photo-facsimiles, first, if the problem were solved of relating the plates closely and conveniently to the appropriate printed part of the description; second, if these facsimiles were not reduced;[2] and, third, if they were not retouched. I should prefer facsimiles to be accompanied by quasi-facsimile transcription to serve as a standard and to clarify doubtful points, but one could not reasonably insist on this perhaps. However, unreduced facsimiles are very difficult to work in with the rest of the printed description without a great deal of wasted space, accompanied by a marked increase in the expenses for extra paper and presswork as well as for the cut itself. And my own experience in dealing with manufacturers of line, or zinc, cuts is that they cannot reproduce satisfactorily many a sixteenth- to eighteenth-century title-page without retouching.[3] Once retouching is

[1] For example, a bibliographer might seriously consider whether the extra money required for photo-facsimiles of titles would not, for his material, be better spent in providing more details of description, not for the purposes of identification but to increase the general bibliographical usefulness of his work. More detail, or more precise detail, will sometimes, on practical grounds, assist a user to discover sophisticated copies, in my experience a far more common occurrence than unrecorded editions. More detail will, also, increase the bibliographical depth of the work by making it usable for research into printing practices.

[2] Reduction can well be allowed for machine-printed books in a period when the title-page is not cluttered; but I do not think that reduction is at all practicable for most periods of hand-printing. Throughout this paper I have had most specifically in mind the problems of descriptive bibliography for early books. I am sorry for this, but exigencies of time and space left no alternative.

[3] As an example, line cuts were first ordered to illustrate the imprints in W. B. Todd's article on Shakespeare's Second Folio in *Studies in Bibliography*, v (1952). A good firm refused to make these cuts under the instructions not to retouch, and insisted on the use of more expensive offset. Unless the individual bibliographer controls every step in the process of making a cut—and usually this is impracticable—he cannot guarantee that retouching has not taken place, since its use is so normal in cut making that it is taken for granted by the manufacturers. In order to control the process the bibliographer would need to demand to see the

admitted, it becomes basically uncontrollable by the bibliographer; and it is always, from any scholarly point of view, a form of faking. I feel strongly on this point. Mr. Gaskell has suggested that it is quite practicable to reduce title cuts to 4 by 3 inches. Doubtless this would do for modern novels (where I should gladly admit it); but from experience I believe I can state that many a crowded title of an early book would be unreadable at that or at any reduction. Possibly by the alignment of types someone could identify a variant major resetting from such a reduced cut; but the cut would often be useless for any other purpose. Advocates of reduced title-cuts for early books do not seem to take account of the fact that some users of the bibliography will actually want to read the title-page; and that with a 4 by 3 inch cut a transcription will need to be provided for this worthy purpose. If both cut and transcription must be used, then we are faced with considerably greater expense, and some duplication. I myself think it is the ideal method: I wish I could employ it. But if I must make a choice between cut and quasi-facsimile transcription, I should take the transcription, always provided the rest of the description is sufficiently full and provided the investigation has been made according to scholarly standards. May I repeat: no mechanical process can act as a substitute for such standards.

A good descriptive bibliography should assist directly the users of the books it lists, and indirectly those who come to it merely for certain kinds of information which may not require consultation of the books themselves. I cannot hope to indicate all the possible uses, apart from simple identification, that can be applied to descriptive bibliography. A bibliography—to mention only one—can specify to a literary critic, within some limits, the most suitable edition, or that best form of the most suitable edition for him to utilize. I qualify this statement, for I do not see how, ordinarily, a descriptive bibliographer can be responsible for collating the texts, which is the only way he could discover in some cases without notice that a particular edition after the first has been authoritatively revised; or that a title-page claim to revision is in fact untrue. I happen to know that Dryden revised the second edition of *The Indian Emperour* in 1668, and the third edition in 1670, and no other edition thereafter.[1] But I know this from having edited the play, not from having described it bibliographically. Nevertheless, in my bibliography the critic will at least find three editions listed and differentiated in 1670 instead of the previously recorded two, and he will find them in their right order, which has previously been confused. So much, I hope, will be found for every play I treat. In such cases the descriptive bibliographer must collate text provided this is the only means for

photographs from which the negatives were to be made before passing them as suitable provided these prints were not themselves retouched; and he would need to demand assurances, much more difficult, that the negative had not been doctored subsequently.

[1] 'Current Theories of Copy-Text, with an Illustration from Dryden', *Modern Philology*, xlviii (1950), 12–20.

deciding or for confirming the correct order of editions. From collation alone can one confirm that the three 1696 editions of *The Indian Emperour* have commonly been listed in reverse order of publication. From collation alone can it be known that of the three 1684 editions of Dryden's *State of Innocence* the commonly listed fifth edition is in fact the third, and the commonly esteemed third is in fact the ninth, a late misdated piracy. Or that the eighth and ninth editions as commonly described are in fact the eighth and seventh, in reverse order.[1] To this extent a descriptive bibliography can prepare the ground for criticism by accurately differentiating editions and assigning them their right order. It can also help criticism by determining and recording the full and ideal form of the various editions listed.[2] It can warn not only of major alterations in press but also of cancels, and indicate, when discovered, the characteristics of the two forms of uncancelled and cancelled leaves. Any biographer must consult a bibliography, for the history of the author's brain-children is part of the biography of that author. The publishing history of the author may be illuminated; and in some circumstances his textual history may be clarified. A record of the location of copies of the various forms, and of their completeness or imperfection, is of enormous assistance to students. It is difficult to limit the uses which can be found for the analytical determination of ideal copy within a series of correctly arranged editions, the relation of all variants to this ideal copy, and everything in the editions that in a printing and publishing way happened to the book within its life.

I do not maintain that a descriptive bibliographer should do all of a textual critic's work for him; but I do suggest that any editor or critic of Restoration drama can be somewhat fortified if he knows that a bibliographer has gone over his material first and will guarantee that every page of every listed copy is in the same setting and imposition unless specific exceptions have been made. And that bibliographical determination has been made of all known problems, such as the separation and the order of the two unrecorded editions of Betterton's *Prophetess* in 1690 and of Buckingham's *Chances* in 1692, the three 'first editions' of Ogilby's *Entertainment* in 1661, the two recorded editions of Southerne's *Fatal Marriage* in 1694, of Shadwell's *Psyche* in 1675, and so on. Or if, say, he is editing Lee's plays, and wants to collate for variant readings all the seventeenth-century editions, that the piracies of three plays will be outlined for him, which otherwise he might never dis-

[1] M. H. Hamilton, 'The Early Editions of Dryden's *State of Innocence*', *Studies in Bibliography*, v (1952), 163–6; and my 'The Pirated Quarto of Dryden's *State of Innocence*', ibid., pp. 166–70.

[2] For example, some important alterations were made to the text of Crowne's *City Politiques*, 1683, while sheet K was going through the press. Since the second edition of 1688 follows the expanded form, a critic who knew only the unaltered state of sheet K in 1683 would believe that fresh authority had entered the text in 1688, whereas in truth the second edition is a mere reprint. Yet if a critic took it that in this place the 1688 edition had been authoritatively revised, he would be bound to give some possible authority to other variants elsewhere in the second edition, whereas these are in fact printer's corruptions.

cover and separate from the legitimate editions.[1] It should be of some comfort to know which of two leaves in Lee's *Princess of Cleve*, 1689, was intended for cancellation;[2] that the ideal copy of the cancel leaf in Congreve's *Double Dealer*, 1694, can be found in only one recorded example but can be reconstructed bibliographically from others;[3] that there is no cancel in Southerne's *Disappointment*, 1684;[4] that the order of the first two editions of Dryden's *Wild Gallant*, 1669, is such and such and not the reverse;[5] that bibliographical demonstration can be made of the order of the two settings for sheets B–D in Banks's *Cyrus the Great*, 1696;[6] that there are two different type-settings of the single leaf g1 which bridges the two-section printing of Crowne's *Country Wit*, 1675; that the cancelland leaves containing the original ending for the second act of Payne's *Morning Ramble*, 1673, may be found, so far as I know at the moment, only in copies at Lincoln College, Oxford, and the University of Michigan; that there is a unique completely reset forme in the Worcester College, Oxford, copy of D'Avenant's *Man's the Master*, 1669; that there is a reimposed sheet in Dryden's *Spanish Friar*, 1681; that there are more editions of Vanbrugh's *Aesop*, 1697, than have been listed, and more of Jevon's *Devil of a Wife*, 1695, than have been recorded; and so on.

These are all problems which lie in the bibliographer's own work of identification and ordering before he even comes to making up his descriptions. It has been suggested that the descriptions themselves should be written in a form best suited to assist the textual critic, and that details of interest chiefly to the analysis of the printing and publication should be condensed or omitted. I do not really understand this point of view, for the descriptions themselves, as descriptions, and distinct from the collateral notes, are of no use to textual criticism; it is the bibliographer's prior identification and interpretation of his evidence which is of importance.[7] But the bibliographer has recognized these variant forms I have been listing by just the process of comparison (except in a more refined way) that presumably anyone with an unrecorded copy checking it against the description would use to discover variants calling for investigation. Hence to demand that the

[1] 'Nathaniel Lee: Three Probable Seventeenth-Century Piracies', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, xliv (1950), 62–66.

[2] 'A Crux in the Text of Lee's *Princess of Cleve*, 1689, II, i', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, iv (1950), 409–11.

[3] 'The Cancel Leaf in Congreve's *Double Dealer*, 1694', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, xliii (1949), 78–82.

[4] 'The Supposed Cancel in Southerne's *The Disappointment* Reconsidered', *The Library*, 5th series, v (1950), 140–9.

[5] 'The First Edition of Dryden's *Wild Gallant*, 1669', ibid., 51–54.

[6] 'The Variant Sheets in John Banks's *Cyrus the Great*, 1696', *Studies in Bibliography*, iv (1951), 174–83.

[7] One may query of what use to textual criticism were the bibliographical descriptions of the two 1669 editions of Dryden's *Wild Gallant* when they were given in the wrong order. The descriptions themselves could reveal nothing of the correct order; yet if an editor had followed the bibliographer's misassignment of these two editions he would have used a derived edition for his copy-text and would have reprinted some important errors.

details of a description be condensed so that the textual critic may use them is in my opinion to confuse the wider purposes of bibliographical description and indeed to assist in removing all possibility for the discovery of further variants in copies not seen by the bibliographer. I cannot emphasize too strongly that all detail about printing practice is of textual concern, since any abnormality anywhere in the book may have textual repercussions. It is strange to have these printing variants, the raw material for analytical bibliography, named as of interest only to collectors. Does a bibliographer list a book with a variant page number at a certain place? If the forme were unlocked to alter the pagination, possibly textual alterations were made at the same time: an editor had better collate the text of that forme very carefully in the variant copies. Is a book printed simultaneously in two sections? Either the listing in the description of typographical differences in running-titles or of differences in the type-page measurements should reveal this important fact for textual criticism, since the text will be affected by the characteristics of more than one compositor.[1] Every minute piece of the printing history of the book is of crucial textual concern; and if the bibliographer, who is in the best position to work out this history, is prevented

[1] I myself treasure such titbits as the following: in George Granville Lord Lansdowne's *She-Gallants*, 1696, the printer's measure in the preliminaries is 116 mm. The text starting on sig. B1 is set to a measure of 111 or 112 mm. on B1 and B1^{v} but thereafter between B2 and F4^{v} changes to 116 mm. From G1 to the conclusion on L2^{v}, the measure reverts to 111 or 112 mm. I propose to print this information in my bibliography and shall be disappointed if any textual critic of the play ignores its implications, for if he knows his business he will see that he has been given important information about the compositors. I am not engaging in bibliographical virtuosity in purveying such information based on the listing of minute detail: I am trying to assist the critic who may not be aware, before he comes to descriptions, that such evidence can exist. So far as I have had experience in my own work both with analytical and descriptive bibliography and also with textual criticism, my feeling is that a textual critic would be better advised to demand from a descriptive bibliographer the maximum of detail rather than the minimum. It is not beyond all possibility that an advanced textual critic will know better than a descriptive bibliographer (who may not have had editorial and critical experience) how to apply bibliographical evidence to textual problems. Correspondingly, some detail in a bibliographical description may excite the interest of a textual critic to find its application in cases—not wholly uncommon—where the descriptive bibliographer knows more than he does. Thus if I were an editor and were engaged on the text of *She Ventures and He Wins*, 1696, the information that the preliminaries in sheet A and the first text sheet B were set to a 123 mm. measure, sheet C to 120 mm., whereas D–G to 130 mm., might save me from some unwarranted assumptions about the applicability of evidence from sheet D, say, to a crux in sheet B. And if I were a textual bibliographer searching in bibliographies to improve my acquaintance with printing conditions in the period affecting text, I should find this evidence useful. Finally, if I were an analytical bibliographer reading bibliographies to assess evidence about printing practices, I should be glad to find in those measurements confirmation for the fact that in some first editions the preliminaries might be set first, not last. I might have suspected it, of course, if the bibliographer had pointed out—as he ought—that the catchword on A4^{v} was 'He' for head-title 'She' on B1, even if the bibliographer had not seen and recorded the unique copy at the University of Illinois in which the head-title reads, in error, 'He Ventures, and She Wins', and this error is found uniquely in the running-titles of the outer forme, demonstrating also that in this case the outer forme passed first through the press, from which fact certain assumptions can be made about the rate of compositorial to press speed and thus about the number of copies printed. Reduce the details of description indeed!

from making such evidence known, it will very likely become permanently lost. Textual students may reasonably expect a certain amount of bibliographical pre-digestion for their benefit; but they must not try to influence either the presentation of evidence on which conclusions are based, or the simple presentation of evidence without conclusions, for sometimes the conclusions can be appropriately drawn only by the textual critic or the generalizing analytical bibliographer. What is important is to recognize that one simply cannot separate any operation of the printer from its possible textual consequences.[1] I could illustrate this point at length, but I must pass on to a swift survey of two other matters before I close.

The first I must simply state and then move on. The mass of bibliographical detail contained in a good bibliography may superficially have no direct textual or publication bearing; but it will eventually be used somehow by the bibliographer. A late seventeenth-century quarto of Shakespeare may be of no consequence whatever to the textual critic of Shakespeare, although the information about who printed it, and how, may unexpectedly illuminate a similar problem in Dryden of extreme textual pertinence. (I hasten to add, this is a hypothetical example, only.) If one rules out from descriptive bibliography the recording of interesting detail because it seems to have no pertinence, one will be calling down on one's head the curses of the next generation, which may have found a most ingenious use for the evidence. As I have remarked elsewhere, if even McKerrow, whom I venerate, could write of press-figures only that they seemed to have little bibliographical significance, a view which Dr. Todd has shown to be short-sighted, it is difficult for us lesser students to feel fully capable of estimating the value for the future of some kinds of bibliographical evidence merely because at the moment we do not see how to apply it. Moreover, some of this evidence is always applicable, at least to the analytical bibliographer in search of material. For bibliographies are also, I maintain, written to assist that neglected scholar the bibliographer, who seldom seems to be envisaged as a user. Bibliographies, I hold, should be written to advance bibliographical knowledge. The fact that they often have such important mundane uses as assisting the acquisition of books, or helping a textual critic about his business, should not blind us to the fact that they are also independent works of bibliographical scholarship which need to be consulted by research bibliographers. To insist that description be so denuded of bibliographical detail that whenever a bibliographer wants to ascertain some fact about printing, like the uses of running-titles and of press-figures for analysing presswork, he must order up from his library a miscellaneous group of books

[1] Moreover, one must recognize that bibliography and text are interrelated for *all* editions, not merely for textually authoritative editions. In order to deal properly with all details of an authoritative text a critic must have an intimate knowledge of how text is corrupted by the printing or copying process. This he can best learn by working closely with tracing the mutations of text through unauthoritative editions, with due regard for the bibliographical information which can be extended to these editions.

without knowing what they contain to his purpose, and that he should never be able to secure such evidence from a bibliography is a singularly short-sighted view which can cause much harm. But at present I cannot elaborate this subject.

I shall close with a few hasty generalizations about degressive bibliography, a phrase increasing in popular esteem at the moment. Madan popularized this phrase not quite fifty years ago,[1] although I think almost nothing has been done with it since his day. To Madan degressive bibliography meant varying the description according to the difference in the period treated or the importance of the work to be described. There was no conflict for him between these two essentially divergent criteria, since it seemed self-evident at the time that *incunabula* for period, and for importance, required a very full description, and a late machine-printed book practically no detail. Those who are now advocating the theory of degression as applied to bibliography are the first to disclaim Madan's own interpretation and practice;[2] but so far as I am aware they have offered little but generalizations to fill the resulting vacuum, and are still forced back on the basic inconsistency in practice which degression would permit. One critic, it is true, agrees substantially with Madan in the proportions of detail he assigned to incunables and on up to machine-printed books; and would apply the degressive principle (which in practice always seems to mean *less* detail) to books of no textual significance. Another believes that the formula for description which I advocate is unnecessarily elaborate even for the books for which it was designed;[3] and that for later periods more elasticity (i.e., degression) —nature unspecified—should be permitted.[4]

[1] F. Madan, *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, ix (1906–8), 53–65.

[2] In practice, only incunables would receive what we should now call a bibliographical description. Books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and perhaps of the eighteenth, would receive what would approximate to a full catalogue entry. The short entry, which 'befits modern literature', would correspond roughly to an enumerative check-list form. In theory, Madan did not provide any definition of what is to guide a bibliographer in estimating the 'importance' of a work. Right or wrong as the chronological practice may be, it at least produces consistency. But if within a coherent subject or a coherent period some books are amplified in description and others condensed according to 'importance', some very inconsistent results are going to be secured; and critics had better begin to define what is 'important'. I wish them joy of the worm.

[3] This I deny.

[4] I should speculate, instead, that the bibliographers of the future dealing with machine-printed books with any minuteness will find that more elaboration of detail, rather than less, will be found necessary if the central problem of identifying unmarked impressions is to be solved. I suspect that the attempt to solve the problem will take the form of extremely technical detail of measurements, paper study, study of damage to plates in storage between impressions, and so on. If this is to apply the principle of degressive bibliography according to the nature of the material treated, to bring up and to emphasize appropriate evidence in place of less appropriate evidence, then I am for it, and always have been even to the extent of separating in my book the problems and methods of bibliographical description for hand-printed and for machine-printed books. But my impression is that for later-printed books (perhaps the most complex and baffling form of printing one can deal with) present views imply by degression the right to deal with less detail than for relatively simple earlier printing, perhaps for fear of alienating the general reader by too much technical evidence. If this is the way of degressive bibliography, to throw out evidence without substituting at least an equal amount of more

I am hesitant to advocate any method which relies on the bibliographer's own decision as to what is significant and non-significant evidence, or on which edition is textually significant or not. I do not hold that the bibliographer is an ignorant mole burrowing his way under literature without regard for the sunlight of the content. I merely wish to point out that definitions of what is significant vary according as the definer is a textual critic, a literary historian, a recorder of publishing history, or an analytical bibliographer. There can be no common agreement between these as to what is significant to preserve, according to the degressive principle, and what to discard; and in fact there can only be conflict since each ultimately would like to be bibliography's sole master. Under these circumstances I am hesitant about attempting to discern any general principles which one can reasonably apply to clarify the workings of degressive bibliography, other than the two stated below, without unbalancing the nature, purposes, and methods of bibliographical description.

In practice I see a rough and ready form of degression working itself out in accordance with the amount and the acuteness of investigation which descriptive bibliographers have devoted to their subject within the range of their abilities; but I should hesitate to offer this Darwinian natural selection as a principle. The only two degressive principles that I really know, and that I attempt to apply myself, are: (1) changes in the mechanical processes by which books are printed should have small effect on the general amount of detail offered in a description but should certainly affect the nature of the detail according to the period and the art treated; and (2) a full description of one edition, which by convenience and convention is ordinarily the first, may relieve the bibliographer from offering equally full detail in later editions when this is chiefly repetitive. The loss of significant detail is not therefore very great, and the descriptions of editions after the first may be materially simplified so long as they remain relatively similar reprints. But since this particular form of degressiveness is only a matter of commonsense convenience, if some key late edition underwent a change in form and itself became the copy for a subsequent series of reprints, thus requiring detail in its description to which they could refer, I should myself feel it necessary on purely bibliographical grounds to revert temporarily to my original fullness of description.[1] These two categories, as I take it, represent allowable degres-

valid evidence for the changed conditions, then I am not for it and do not prophesy a bright future which will attract many scholars to such a debased and vulgarized procedure, no matter how directly the principle may stem from Madan's restricted views on the value of dealing bibliographically with late printing. As a matter of fact, when the technicians really get to work on the problems of machine-printing, I rather suspect that the general reader and the bibliographer who has catered to him are due to suffer a shock. For an interesting start in generalizing about evidence which can be drawn from a study of plate variation and machine printing, see C. R. Coxe, 'The Pre-Publication Printings of Tarkington's *Penrod*', *Studies in Bibliography*, v (1952), 156–7.

[1] This is substantially what I had in mind in my remarks in *Principles*, pp. 383 ff., about 'parent' editions and their subsidiaries.

sive bibliography on bibliographical principles, not on principles brought to bibliography from outside by the special interests of historian or of textual critic.

Until his discipline is better understood than it is at present, the bibliographer—it seems to me—will always, perhaps, fail to satisfy completely each class of user of a descriptive bibliography. It is inevitable that each will make such demands for its own special interests that to give way to any school would seriously unbalance a bibliography. As I stated at the beginning, I advocate as desirable and necessary the service which descriptive bibliography can perform to various fields of conflicting interest. But in this process I believe that bibliography will suffer if it falls under the domination of any other discipline and is thus untrue to its own principles. I am conscious that the concept of bibliography as a means to an end, as the servant of literary and historical studies, is one which is popularly held and will not readily be relinquished. I must, I am afraid, place myself in opposition to this view. Bibliography in its several essential forms is, I hold, an end in itself and not a means to an end; it is an independent discipline of scholarship and not merely an ancillary technique to literary investigation.[1] Textual and literary criticism, and literary history, may draw on its findings, as they necessarily must; but this does not mean that the reservoir of bibliographical knowledge and its future development should run through only one set of pipes to end in a faucet that can be turned on or off at will. I believe we are in a period which is witnessing bibliography coming of age: the sooner we all adjust our thinking to this new concept, the better bibliography we shall have—the immediate concern of this society—and, I make bold to say, what is our broader concern, the better criticism and history.

[1] Arguments in favour of this view will be found in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, xlvi (1952), 186–208, referred to above.