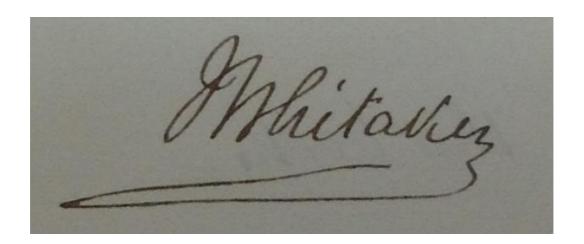
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'Mechanic' to the book trade: Joseph Whitaker and information services in the Victorian book trade



Submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Information Studies UCL

Signed Declaration

I, Rachel Elisabeth Calder, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

Abstract

Joseph Whitaker is best remembered today as the originator of *Whitaker's Almanack* but he should also be recognised as one of the most important publishers of the mid- and late-Victorian period and the creator of an information system that transformed the book trade into a modern industry. As editor of a trade journal and catalogue aimed at supporting the bookselling trade, respectively *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature*, he had a panoramic view of trade activities and of the commercial and structural forces that governed them. By gathering, organising and disseminating information he considered most valuable for these traders and encouraging them to participate in discussions and debates about the issues that affected their livelihoods, Whitaker helped booksellers grasp the opportunities of the growing demand for books and mitigate the risks to their businesses.

A close and systematic examination of *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue* offers new perspectives on the operations of the Victorian book trade and insights into the practices and experiences of ordinary booksellers whose voices are usually silent in the historical record. Using historical analysis and conceptualising the book trade as a supply chain of competing traders rather than a coherent community, the thesis argues that Whitaker's publications were more than just sources of information. They were the key elements in an information service devised initially to support booksellers but that became the foundations of a communication system for the whole book trade that remain at the heart of the contemporary publishing industry to this day.

Impact statement

This study fills a gap in the scholarship by recovering the life and work of an important Victorian publisher. J. Whitaker and Sons operated for 150 years and the discovery of the Whitaker Archive as a result of this study offers a rare resource with which to study the Victorian book trade. Many of the challenges of today's book trade emerged at this time – deep and unregulated discounting of new titles, copyright infringement and battles over territorial boundaries, the challenge of managing the ever-growing volume of new books – which suggests that some of the difficulties faced by booksellers and the commercial tensions between them and the publishers were both structural and contingent on the current economic environment. The research also reveals that while all commercial activities were exposed to the same forces, individual booksellers, once given the opportunity to air their views in *The* Bookseller, were often more concerned with smaller practical matters, such as access to information, worries about carriage costs of books, too-long credit periods and unpaid bills, and unfair competition from those outside the book trade. This fuller understanding of the historic challenges of bookselling has already attracted interest from the current editor of *The* Bookseller who will consider a series of articles about comparisons between the Victorian book trade 150 years ago and today.

Book historians and scholars of print culture have often focused on the activities of the leading publishing houses and the production of imaginative literature, but *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue* provide the opportunity for a broader examination of categories of non-fiction from a wide range of general and specialist publishers that constituted the core of many booksellers' inventory: factual, educational, handbooks, guides and almanacks, account ledgers and other printed stationery books. Such a study offers the potential to discover a different picture of the book reading habits of Victorians, with an examination of their non-fiction reading choices such as textbooks, manuals, and guides. *The Bookseller*

could also be used as source material for historical studies researching the world of work (such as at Greenwich University's BLT19 project), trends in advertising design, and the spread of literacy and numeracy.

The application of techniques from digital humanities such as GIS mapping could plot the geographical movements of the book trade, especially in London. Booksellers' addresses could be collected from the Gazette and back pages and cross-referenced with Kelly's and other directories. Publishers' addresses would come from advertisements and catalogues. Using the entries in *Hodsons Directory* (1855) as the starting point, the spread of publishing and bookselling in London could be for tracked each decade. Similar maps could be created for the rest of England and Scotland. Given the breadth of possibilities, Whitaker himself could not fail to be pleased at the continued relevance and importance of his legacy.

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Abbreviations	
BKS – The Bookseller	
WA – Whitaker's Almanack	
RCCL – The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature	
PC – The Publishers' Circular	
CHBB5 – The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume 5 1695-1830	
CHBB6 – The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume 6 1830-1914	
ASLIB – ASLIB Proceedings	
ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography	
BPI – Booksellers' Provident Institution	
LBS – London Booksellers' Society	
ABGBI – Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland	
HCPP – House of Commons Parliamentary Papers	

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Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my supervisors, Samantha Rayner and Andrew Nash, who have supported and encouraged me through this process with grace and patience, and I thank them for their astute observations and expert guidance throughout.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father Richard Henry Calder (1936-2015)

Foreword

Today's book trade has access to a wide range of communication and information systems and support services available to them, many of which were originally devised by Joseph Whitaker more than a hundred and fifty years ago. 1 The Bookseller, the trade's magazine, now carries the strapline 'at the heart of publishing since 1858' and continues to provide a weekly digest of news, business intelligence, commentary and analysis from around the industry. A typical issue includes notices of forthcoming titles organised by genre and theme, interviews with authors of key titles, bestseller lists and statistical analysis of book sales, book advertising, in-depth market insight reports, and job advertisements. Other current services include organising conferences and hosting industry awards. The bibliographic information, sales data, and analysis of market trends compiled by Nielsen Book UK to aid 'the discovery and purchase, distribution and sales measurement of books' are based on datasets that originated with cumulative book lists collected from *The Bookseller* and *The* Reference Catalogue of Current Literature (hereafter The Reference Catalogue), the compilation of publishers' current sales catalogues that Whitaker launched in 1874.2 Much of the discourse in *The Bookseller* today concerns methods to improve efficiency in the supply chain, ideas for developing standards and promoting best practices, suggestions to improve communication within the book trade, ways to use sales data and consumer insight to make better marketing decisions, and how to increase 'discoverability' and correctly estimate print runs. Similarly, trade-wide initiatives and award schemes for bookselling, analyses of industry statistics, advocacy and policymaking, networking opportunities, and professional education and training are now co-ordinated by the trade associations, the Booksellers Association and the Publishers Association. These activities are all part of Whitaker's legacy.

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¹ The term 'book trade' refers primarily to booksellers, publishers, libraries, and allied trades whose main concerns are the production, promotion, and distribution of books.

² Nielsen Book ÜK, https://nielsenbook.co.uk, [accessed 9 April 2020].

Chapter One: Introduction: Rationale, Literature Review and Methodology

Introduction: 'Part of the system of things'

Joseph Whitaker was a central figure in the mid- and late-Victorian book trade but is now little known. His most important publications modernised the provision of affordable specialist information for a non-elite readership thereby democratising knowledge and encouraging informed participation in professional and national discourse. David Whitaker, great-grandson and penultimate managing director of J. Whitaker and Sons, described the work of his family's firm as that of a 'mechanic' to the book trade, a description that only partly encapsulates the achievements of the founder.³ Whitaker aimed to provide an information and communication service primarily for the benefit of the bookselling trade as, in his experience, the existing publications were inadequate. Originally apprenticed as a bookbinder and bookseller, he founded a number of trade publications, the most important of which were The Bookseller and The Reference Catalogue. The titles contributed to the modernisation of the British book trade and remain integral to the information systems and the bureaucratic infrastructure on which today's publishing industry still depends. His nontrade titles were general non-fiction, devotional titles, and works of reference such as Whitaker's Almanack (1869), the Wikipedia of its day. A compendium of statistical and official information packaged in an affordable and accessible format, the title was devised for a previously under-served section of society, lower-middle class readers like himself who otherwise had no easy access to such information. From his first attempts as an independent publisher, Whitaker's titles were designed to support the activities of a specified group of

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³ Interview with David Whitaker, 28 June 2012.

⁴ Whitaker's Almanack (hereafter WA) was bought by Rebellion Publishing in February 2020. For the sake of consistency and as Whitaker used the archaic spelling for his work, the same spelling will be used in the thesis apart from when citing titles with the newer spelling, 'almanac'.

people, providing them with trusted sources of information to help them discharge their duties and obligations.

Despite the importance of his publications, neither Whitaker nor his publications and the contribution they made to the Victorian book trade have been researched or analysed systematically or in depth. If he is remembered at all in the popular imagination it is as the originator of a popular almanack. Even on his death in May 1895, the majority of the obituaries commemorated him as the name behind *Whitaker's Almanack*. Amongst his book trade peers, however, he was celebrated as 'a man greatly respected in the trade', and as someone whose publications where highly consequential for the British bookselling world. Many of the tributes noted his willingness to help his fellow bookmen, his devotion to the book trade, and of the importance of his publications. One paper, *The St James's Gazette*, summarised his achievements, stating that 'Whitaker, like Bradshaw, has long ceased to be a man and had become "part of the system of things". The comparison is apt: like George Bradshaw and his series of railway guides, Whitaker used his publications to organise and systematise the greatly increased volume of information about new books available for booksellers. While Bradshaw has undergone a revival in the popular mind thanks to a series of television programmes, Whitaker remains largely unknown.

The book trade publications of the first half of the nineteenth century, *Bent's Literary Advertiser* and *The Publishers' Circular*, were primarily advertising sheets that included lists of new book compiled from a range of mainly London-based publishers produced for booksellers, reading societies, educational institutions, and circulating libraries. They carried only a little news, commentary, or analysis of market conditions. Retrospective bibliographic catalogues, such as *The London Catalogue* (1846), *The British Catalogue* (1853), and *The*

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⁵ The Whitaker Archive (hereafter TWA), Obituaries Book, *Athenaeum*, 18 May 1895.

⁶ TWA, Obituaries Book, St James's Gazette, 18 May 1895.

⁷ Michael Portillo has presented a series of railways journeys such as 'Great British Railway Journeys' and 'Great Continental Railway Journeys', based on Bradshaw's railway guides.

English Catalogue (1864), were published sporadically, and the information they contained quickly became misleading as titles went out of print or prices were changed.

Whitaker's extensive experience in the book trade as both a bookseller and publisher gave him an understanding of the challenges faced by colleagues as they sought to balance the opportunities and risks of producing and distributing books during a period when commercial activity was guided by *laissez faire* economic principles.⁸ He saw retail booksellers as the vulnerable party engaged in asymmetrical business relationships with the more powerful copyright-holding publishers and was galvanised into producing a modernised trade journal to support them. *The Bookseller* reported on a variety of trade business, such as announcements of new firms or changes of ownership, relayed and exchanged trade gossip and business intelligence, and provided summaries and assessments of a wide variety of new books to keep booksellers up to date. He also encouraged participation in trade affairs and offered the pages of *The Bookseller* as a public forum, moderated by himself, where issues of concern could be debated, grievances aired, and undesirable behaviours exposed. The new journal soon developed into not just an information service but also a means of communication for a dispersed and diverse network of retailers operating across the country and overseas.

The journal found support amongst booksellers and publishers alike, and quickly became a quasi-institution. Although primarily advocating on behalf of booksellers, *The Bookseller* also championing actions that would benefit the trade as a whole such as encouraging the agreement of trade-wide standards of business and better training for assistants, functions that would fall under the remit of the trade associations formed at the end of the century. These important aspects of Whitaker's publications have not been

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⁸ Chapter Two includes an account of Whitaker's years as a bookseller and publisher before he launched *The Bookseller*.

properly researched to date. By examining the structure and contents of his publications and analysing the services they offered, this thesis evaluates the influence and impact of Whitaker and his publications on the Victorian book trade. The study is a contribution to the understanding of the conditions of the making and selling of books in the second half of the nineteenth century and establishes the significance of Whitaker's legacy for the modern publishing industry.

Research questions

The primary objective of this thesis is to evaluate the contribution made by Joseph Whitaker and his publications to the Victorian book trade. To this end, three main avenues of investigation were followed:

- 1. How did Whitaker's publications differ in form and function from other available titles?
- 2. What services did these publications offer their readers and to what extent were the editorial ambitions achieved?
- 3. What were the implications of the success of those publications and what are their lasting legacies for the modern book trade?

This thesis argues that Whitaker's publications sought to do more than just publish information. He created an information and communication service that was intended not only to increase the levels of knowledge and expertise in his readers but also raise their self-confidence and foster a community spirit whether as a member of the book trade, or, for readers of *Whitaker's Almanack*, as citizens of an increasingly powerful nation.

Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the research with an explanation of the reasons for undertaking the research and a literature review, an account of

the primary and secondary sources, and an outline of the methodology and theoretical framing. After a biographical sketch of Whitaker's early life, Chapter Two examines the conditions of bookselling in the year he set up in business. That year, 1852, was highly significant, not least because it marked the beginning of a period of deregulation, the era of free trade in books, that was to have a profound effect on the bookselling trade. The failure of Whitaker's first attempt at business a few years later was a painful experience that informed his decision to launch his first trade publication in 1858, *The Bookseller*.

Chapter Three analyses the journalistic innovations Whitaker developed for *The Bookseller* by examining its structure and content. The new journal quickly became the progenitor of a new kind of specialist publication that provided product information and extensive journalism, and focused on the requirements of the retailer rather than those of the producer. It was quickly imitated by other trades. Chapter Four analyses the trade journalism in *The Bookseller* and how Whitaker used it to raise the level of literary knowledge and commercial expertise of booksellers, and to foster a trade consciousness and sense of common purpose. By sharing and exchanging information, the journal acted as an unofficial monitor or watchdog, exposing potential threats and indicating business opportunities.

Whitaker hoped that a more knowledgeable and self-confident bookselling trade would be more successful, and that a greater sense of *esprit de corps* that would ultimately result in the revival of trade associations that could act in the collective interest to tackle some of the most damaging business practices.

After devoting himself to *The Bookseller* for a decade, Whitaker broadened his publishing activities with two works of reference. Chapter Five examines two of the most important reference titles, the popular statistical almanack *Whitaker's Almanack* and *The Reference Catalogue*, a physically huge book that from 1874 collected publishers' current sales catalogues and published them in a single volume. This offered booksellers the most

comprehensive repository of bibliographic and sales information about books in print then available. The last section of the chapter returns to *The Bookseller* to examine the period during which Whitaker passed some editorial responsibilities to his sons and the trade associations he had long advocated were finally formed. Throughout the preceding decades, *The Bookseller* played a crucial role as a conduit of communication as the book trade slowly accepted the need for regulations and mechanisms to modernise business practices and maintain the health of the bookselling ecosystem. The key findings of the research are summarised in the Conclusion along with suggestions for ways that Whitaker's publications could be fruitfully used for further research into the history of the Victorian book trade.

Rationale for a study of Joseph Whitaker and literature review

This thesis is the first full-length academic study of Whitaker's life, business, and publications and will fill a gap in the understanding of bookselling and publishing in the midand late- Victorian period. In many ways Whitaker's business was typical of the time; a small operation publishing books in a variety of genres for non-elite readerships such as almanacks, diaries, catalogues, periodicals, and devotional works. With each of the firm's most important trade titles, *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue*, he created modernised versions of the trade journal and the trade catalogue. With *Whitaker's Almanack*, he refreshed the almanack genre by adding extensive statistical information to the traditional calendar and astrological content, and including analysis from official sources that was usually accessible only to politicians and businessmen. Scholars such as Maureen Perkins and Katherine Anderson have studied traditional almanacks, but the focus of their studies ends in the late

newspapers and periodicals. Whitaker's Almanack, first published in December 1868, is examined in Chapter Five. Although the almanack is an important part of the evaluation of Whitaker's impact on the Victorian book trade, the emphasis in this thesis is on his book trade publications, *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue*, as they were the key elements of the information service he created for the book trade.

Whitaker's trade titles were devised in response to the volume of book production that had risen over the first half of the century, peaking in the early 1850s. 10 Without the benefit of hindsight, it could reasonably be expected that the trend would continue. Whitaker saw an opportunity to improve the traditional publishers' trade advertiser by focusing on the requirements of the retailer, providing them with a far greater selection of trade news and commentary, statistics and commercial data than was previously available. ¹¹ Two decades later, The Reference Catalogue updated the traditional trade catalogue by transforming it into a single-volume compilation of publishers' current catalogues. By revising it every few years and providing an index of the most important titles, Whitaker created a databank of bibliographical details of the majority of books currently in print. Nonetheless, despite the significance of *The Reference Catalogue* to the book trade and the popularity of *Whitaker's Almanack*, it is Whitaker's trade journal that contains the most germane information for book trade history. He launched *The Bookseller* in response to what he saw as the failures of the existing trade publications, Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser and The Publishers' Circular, expanded the journalistic content and introduced features not offered in the other publications. It is perhaps a cliché about journalism, but the editorial content preserved in *The*

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⁹ Maureen Perkins, *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change 1775-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Katharine Anderson, *Predicting the Weather: Victorians and the Science of Meteorology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Simon Eliot, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1994), p.107.

¹¹ Production actually plateaued in the mid-1850s and rose sharply again only after the mid 1870s: see Eliot, *Some Patterns*, p.107.

Bookseller is, in essence, the first rough draft of history of the Victorian book trade, and its relevance to this study is reflected in the two chapters devoted to it.

The story this first draft tells is very rough indeed. It is also incomplete and formed with a particular editorial policy. Nonetheless, it does reveal some of the reasons why ordinary booksellers often struggled to benefit from the expanding opportunities of the growing mass market for books. As confirmed by the evidence in *The Bookseller*, most booksellers were hybrid traders and had little choice but to diversify their businesses beyond books. They sold non-book items such as newspapers, stationery and fancy goods, and managed other activities such as a lending library or a bindery. Some booksellers carried out jobbing printing or published books of local interest. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, common problems included competition from traders outside the book trade, publishers increasing carriage costs by adding unsolicited material to their packages, and the ever-present concerns of book prices and customer discounts.

This research is also a contribution to a deeper understanding of the trade press, a much-neglected area of academic enquiry despite Richard Altick's suggestion seventy years ago that the study of this class of publication would 'enrich our knowledge of Victorian social history.' By contrast, Whitaker's contemporaries were quick to appreciate the value of this new type of journal. *The City Press*, the local newspaper of the City of London, saw their emergence as 'a sign of the expansion of trade' and immediately recognised their importance:

Most of the important branches of trade are setting up journals of their own for the purposes of intercommunication, mutual defense of interests, diffusion of intelligence, and, let us hope, the improvement, on no narrow or selfish basis, of the particular branch of commerce so represented.¹⁴

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¹² See also John Feather, 'Book Trade Networks and Community Contexts', in *Historical Networks in the Book Trade*, ed. by John Hinks and Catherine Feely (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp.14-28, (pp.21-22).

¹³ Richard Altick, 'Cope's Tobacco Plant: An Episode in Victorian Journalism', Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 45, 4 (1951), 333-50, (p.333).

¹⁴ City Press, 26 November 1859, p.6.

The Bookseller was hailed as the archetype of the new class of journals, standing 'at the head of the list' and was considered a great improvement on the existing publications. 15

Joseph Hatton, author of a history of journalism published in 1882, proposed that one of the main reasons for the 'marvellous success' of Victorian trade journals was the symbiotic relationship between the journalism they offered and the extensive advertising, and that there was 'nothing redundant in their contents'. This specialist content was highly relevant and of great value to the readership:

Every reader of a thorough-going and enterprising journal of this sort is a possible buyer of the articles advertised; hence a trade paper, with a regular circulation of, say, 12,000 to 15,000 copies, is worth more to the advertiser, who only deals with the members of the trade represented, than a general newspaper having a circulation of 250,000 to 300,000.¹⁷

By the 1880s, trade journals had reached every commercial sector, from *The Baker's Record* and *The Hatter's Gazette* to *The Draper* and *The Hairdresser's Chronicle*. In the last decade of the century the Victorian trade journal was acknowledged as the 'organ of communication between manufacturers and dealers and their customers', preserving a wealth of commercial information and business intelligence that traders and merchants used in their daily business lives.¹⁸

However, despite the importance of trade journals and much academic interest in the periodical press as a whole, there have been few studies that examine them as a distinct class. Only one paragraph in David McKitterick's chapter on publishing for the trades and professions is devoted to this topic, with most of the emphasis focused on professional journals. Gaps remain in the understanding of trade journals as a distinct class even in recent histories of the press and studies devoted to periodicals. For instance, there are only

¹⁵ City Press. 26 November 1859, p.6.

¹⁶ Joseph Hatton, *Journalistic London* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), p.213.

¹⁷ Hatton, p.213.

¹⁸ 'The Trade Journal Indispensible', *British Printer*, January-February 1893, p.59.

¹⁹ David McKitterick, 'Publishing for Trades and professions', *CHBB6*, pp.500-32, (p.504).

brief mentions and no analysis of trade journals in *The Routledge Handbook to British*Periodicals and Newspapers and Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century

Britain.²⁰ By contrast, the role played by the professional press in the development of professional practice and identity amongst the legal, scientific and medical professions and the 'domains of knowledge' they developed is well recognised.²¹

Recently, trade journals have been used as sources of economic data and contextual information by economic historians such as Thomas Mollanger on the cognac trade, and Danielle Kinsey on the diamond trade. ²² David Moss and Chris Hosgood have already indicated their importance as historical sources, describing the Victorian trade press as 'a source of fundamental significance' and 'a treasure house of material' that, although considered commonplace, reveals the breadth, variety, and *mentalité* of the Victorian business community and the ecosystem that sustained it. ²³ Of particular significance are the views and opinions expressed by some of the smaller traders whose voices are not captured in print anywhere else. This perspective is valuable. Without expressly mentioning the trade press, in concluding remarks at the end of his history of the English book trade, James Raven highlights the danger for book historians of relying too much on surviving archival evidence originating from the larger London publishers and of failing to find the voices and perspectives from the provinces and from smaller traders. ²⁴ By studying specialist trade

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 ²⁰ The Routledge Handbook to British Periodicals and Newspapers; Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain, ed. by Andrew King, Alexis Easley, John Morton (London and New York, 2016).
 ²¹ Andrew King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', in *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press*, Volume Two: Expansion and Evolution 1800-1900, ed. by David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.558-85, (p.560).

²² Thomas Mollanger, 'The effects of producers' trademark strategies on the structure of the cognac brandy supply chain during the second half of the 19th century: the reconfiguration of commercial trust by the use of brands', *Business History*, 60, 8 (2018), 1255-76; Danielle Kinsey 'Imperial Splendour: Diamonds, Commodity Chains, and Consumer Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois of Urbana-Champaign 2010).

²³ David Moss and Chris Hosgood, 'The Financial and Trade Press', in *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, ed. by J. Don Vann and Rosemary VanArsdel (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp.199-218, (p.200).

²⁴ James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p.377.

publications such as *The Bookseller* and the individuals behind them, it is possible to glimpse 'the nature of the various businesses and trades themselves, the experience of those who participated in them and the institutional and associational world which emerged to influence much of the rhetoric and language of the business community'.²⁵

It has been suggested that one of the reasons for this scholarly neglect is the result of the disciplinary location of most academics interested in periodicals: they tend to be based in literature departments where their primary considerations are textual analysis, or 'sacralised authors, aesthetics and leisure reading' rather than on the concerns of commercial traders.²⁶ Perhaps, as David Moss has proposed, the language of commerce is perceived as too specialised and therefore irrelevant to a wider social history, or even just too 'boring' to attract scholarly interest.²⁷ Additionally, as in Whitaker's case, the business papers and account ledgers of small retailers and traders have often not survived and those that have are incomplete or damaged, making a satisfactory project difficult to complete.²⁸

Many standard book history texts for the mid- and late-Victorian period mention

Whitaker and the book trade press only incidentally. For instance, John Feather's invaluable introduction to book trade history *A History of British Publishing* does not mention *The Bookseller* or *The Publishers' Circular* at all.²⁹ *The Bookseller* is mentioned in *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing* but only in the context of today's publishing industry, not as a resource for book trade history.³⁰ Introductory texts to book history rarely mention Whitaker or his publications at all.³¹

²⁵ Moss and Hosgood, p.200.

²⁶ King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', pp.562-63.

²⁷ David Moss, '*Circular to Bankers*: The Role of the Proto-typical Trade Journal in the Evolution of Middle-Class Professional Consciousness', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 23, 3 (1992), 129-36, (p.130).

²⁸ Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market* (Farnham, Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p.22.

²⁹ John Feather, A History of British Publishing, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2005).

³⁰ The Oxford Handbook of Publishing, ed. by Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³¹ See *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 2nd edition, ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (London Wiley Blackwell, 2012); David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History*, 2nd edition

Bookselling fares only a little better in monographs. In *The Business of Books* James Raven offers detailed examination of the economic and commercial imperatives of bookselling from the earliest days of printing to 1850 but even in this study of the technicalities of bookselling, *The Publishers' Circular* and *The Bookseller* are mentioned only once in a passing reference to book advertising.³² James J. Barnes' classic account of the removal of the controls on book prices, *Free Trade in Books*, provides a detailed account of the campaign leading up to 1852 but, other than a brief mention of Whitaker's despair in the early 1860s at the unwillingness of booksellers to cooperate on underselling, the study skips over the next few decades and picks up the story again in the 1890s as the prospect of the Net Book Agreement emerged.³³

A notable exception is Simon Eliot's analysis of the size and pattern of book production in the nineteenth century, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919*. Eliot created tables of statistical data gleaned from *Bent's*, *The Publishers' Circular*, and *The Bookseller* in addition to other sources such as the British Museum Copyright Receipt Books to establish a baseline of book production. The data indicate changes in the popularity of categories such as the decrease of religious titles and the increase in education books, fiction, and Government 'Blue Books'. Similarly, in studies that focus on the activities and interactions of the book trade itself the trade press is noted as a source of news but not examined as a literary genre of its own. For instance, Alexis Weedon's study of the publishing industry references Whitaker's publications as essential sources of information.³⁴

There have been some recent hopeful developments for trade journals: in 2016

Greenwich University launched an online project, 'Business, Labour, Temperance and Trade

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⁽London Routledge, 2013); Michelle Levy and Tom Mole, *The Broadview Introduction to Book History*, (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2017).

³² Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.339.

³³ James J. Barnes, *Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade since 1800* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), pp.141-43.

³⁴ Weedon, p.6 and p.57.

Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century' (BLT19) and has developed pedagogical tools to encourage students to explore the world of work through the medium of trade journals.³⁵ This project complements two earlier projects: a full run of issues of *The Publishers' Circular* from 1830 to 1900 was transferred to microfiche in 1986, and a decade-long run from 1880-90 was scanned for the Nineteenth Century Serials Edition (NCSE) project and put online in 2008.³⁶ The project's introduction provides an insightful overview of the role of *The Publishers' Circular* as an advertiser and outlines its utility as a research tool for book historians.³⁷

More recently, Andrew King has taken the first steps towards a history of the trade press by proposing a means to establish the boundaries of the genre. King has already contributed a definition of the trade press as 'a subset of class journals that celebrates and forwards specific identities based on the production and distribution of particular classes of good, almost always accompanied by abundant advertising'. ³⁸ For the new study, he used press directories such as *Mitchell's* and *May's* to classify the journals into thirteen categories and tracked the rise in titles as they swelled from under a hundred in 1846 to over five hundred by 1900, as shown in Fig.1. ³⁹

³⁵ https://www.blt19.co.uk [accessed 16 February 2021]

³⁶ The Publishers' Circular 1837-1900, microfiche edition, (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986); https://ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/tec.html [accessed 18 October 2020].

³⁷ The scanned issues can be accessed at https://ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/tec.html covering the years 1880-90.

³⁸ Andrew King, 'The Trade Press', *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (Gent: Academia Press and London: British Library, 2009), p.634.

³⁹ King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', 558-585. The original dataset and an explanation of the methodology and its limitations are available at https://www.blt19.co.uk/academic/trade-and-professional-periodicals-database/ [accessed 16 February 2021].

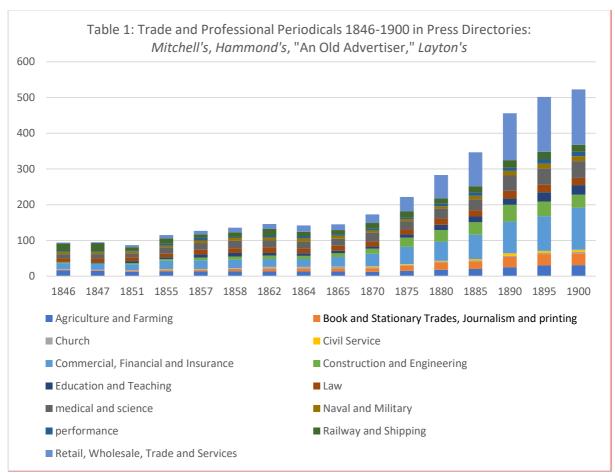


Fig.1 Increase in trade and professional periodicals 1849-1900⁴⁰

The table illustrates the steep growth in the numbers of journals for the book and allied trades over the period from two titles in 1846 to thirty-two in 1900, and highlights what King saw as the importance of this category by separating them from other retail, trades and services. ⁴¹ *The Bookseller* and *The Publishers' Circular* are the most important to historians of the book trade over this period.

Thirty years ago John Sutherland identified the scholarly ignorance of the operations of the book trade and the technicalities of publishing as a 'large and troubling hole' at the heart of book history, a hole that could be filled by researching the journals that reported on

 $^{^{40}}$ King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', p.559. This coloured version has been taken from a draft version of the King chapter, the printed version is black and white.

⁴¹ King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', p.573.

the book trade. ⁴² Since Sutherland's call, a number of studies that investigate the activities of individual publishers and explore the shifting dynamics within the book trade have been completed, including three studies that use book trade journals as source material. ⁴³ The most relevant to Whitaker is Richard Freebury's PhD thesis, 'Attitudes to Literary Property as reflected in *The Bookseller* 1858-1891', which examines contemporary views of literary property, book prices, and Anglo-American copyright as expressed in the pages of *The Bookseller*. ⁴⁴ Freebury's work analyses the statements and questions from a variety of commentators across the book trade, including those expressed by *The Bookseller* itself, but does not evaluate the journal as the forum for those attitudes nor how it operated as an information service for booksellers. Subsequently, Eliot and Freebury combined forces to survey the events in a single year of publishing as reported in *The Bookseller* and *The Publishers' Circular*, noting the new books and magazines and highlighting the slowly shifting dynamics in the domestic and international book trades in 1891. ⁴⁵

Finally, in *How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade*, John Hruschka examines the contribution made by Frederick Leypoldt's trade publications, *Publishers' Weekly* and *The Publishers' Trade List Annual*, to the development of the American book trade in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. ⁴⁶ Despite several important differences in the British and American book trades, such as the diversity of language groups and the challenges of distribution given the sheer geographical size of America, Leypoldt's role in the book trade mirrored Whitaker's. Hruschka concluded that the American book trade was a commercial system with no overarching control mechanism, characterising it as a

⁴² John Sutherland, 'Publishing History: The Hole at the Centre of Literary Sociology', *Critical Enquiry*, 14, 3 (1988), 574-589, (p.574).

⁴³ These studies are examined in a later section of this chapter.

⁴⁴ Richard Freebury, 'Attitudes to Literary Property as reflected in *The Bookseller* 1858-1891', (unpublished PhD thesis, Open University 2003).

⁴⁵ Simon Eliot and Richard Freebury, 'A Year of Publishing: 1891', CHBB6, 674-703.

⁴⁶ John Hruschka, *How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2012).

'a loose network of competing and sometimes incompatible trades'. ⁴⁷ He argued that Leypoldt's publications provided the conduit with which these competitors could communicate with each other and resolve disputes in lieu of a formal regulatory agency such as a trade association. Whitaker's trade journal would play a similar role in the British trade.

Despite his importance to the book trade, Whitaker the man remains elusive. If he wrote diaries or a memoir they have not been found, nor has evidence that he belonged to any gentleman's clubs. He is not listed as a freeman of the Stationers Company and, for such a key figure, left behind a relatively light archival footprint. Chapter Two presents an account of Whitaker's early and family life gathered primarily from publicly available documents and records, and suggests an explanation for his decision to launch *The Bookseller*. The later stages of his life are examined in subsequent chapters and portray him as the head of a large family of fifteen children, in an unhappy marriage, but always as a committed bookman and bibliophile. Perhaps researchers in the future will discover more evidence to add to the modest Whitaker Archive.

Primary sources: The Whitaker Archive

One of the primary reasons for the lack of research into Joseph Whitaker, his business and his publications is the scarcity of documentary evidence. J. Whitaker & Sons at 12 Warwick Lane, known in the book trade as 'Whitakers', was one of the firms who suffered the 'total loss' of its building on the night of 29 December 1940 as a result of aerial bombardment in London. St Paul's Cathedral was saved but many of the buildings around it were completely

⁴⁷ Hruschka, p.167.

⁴⁸ TWA, Insurance claim form 1941, p.2.

destroyed, including many of the publishers and booksellers clustered around Paternoster Row and Warwick Lane. *The Bookseller* reported:

Paternoster Row and its environs, long famous as the historic centre of the British book trade, were totally destroyed in the Nazi attempt to set fire to the City of London last Sunday night.⁴⁹

Also destroyed were Ward Lock, Longmans, Green & Co, Samson Low, Marston & Co, and wholesaler Simpkin Marshall.

Joseph Whitaker had moved into the Warwick Lane building in 1869. He later bought the freehold and modernised the building as a seven-storey structure, complete with a lift. ⁵⁰ The company's records and archives, the register, and minute books were amongst the valuable documents lost in the catastrophic fire. Also lost were file copies of *The Bookseller*, ledgers and account books, correspondence and production files, and other business papers including the extensive collection of reference books used to update *Whitaker's Almanack*. These documents were known to hold invaluable information about the book trade. F. A. Mumby described them as an 'extensive collection of letters, cuttings, extracts from catalogues, etc relating to the trade of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries'. ⁵¹ The history of the book trade is very much the poorer for their loss.

By chance, a few packets of Whitaker's uncatalogued personal correspondence survived in a small private collection belonging to a member of the Whitaker family and were offered on loan with permission that they could be researched and quoted from for the purpose of this study. These are mainly letters written to Whitaker in the 1880s from contacts in the book trade, and from correspondents commissioned to write articles or providing corrections to entries in *Whitaker's Almanack*. The one-sided nature of the surviving letters

⁵⁰ TWA, Uncatalogued letter from Ewan Christian regarding works on No. 12, 25 October 1882.

⁴⁹ The Bookseller (hereafter BKS), 2 January 1941, p.1.

⁵¹ F. A. Mumby, *The Romance of Bookselling: A History of the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910), p.437.

makes it difficult to judge whether these were representative of Whitaker's professional, social, and personal networks but they do at least indicate the range of people with whom he corresponded. Examples include the builders who worked on the Warwick Lane office building in 1882, William Gladstone, John Henry Newman and other members of the Oxford Movement, the widow of George Cruikshank, and Spicers the papermakers. Other packets include letters from publishers such as Richard Bentley, Henry Bohn, W. & R. Chambers, and one letter each from Whitaker's employers J. W. Parker and J. H. Parker. There are also letters from people that he had assisted during times of financial distress such as three letters from publisher Alexander Strahan, who asked for and was granted a loan by Whitaker. Other letters demonstrate Whitaker's kindness and desire to help colleagues and their families in distress.

The archive includes several undated notebooks written in Whitaker's handwriting. An undated note from his youngest son Edgar explains that the notebooks were kept by Whitaker during his time as editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* and subsequently used to compile the early editions of his almanacks. As shown in Fig.2, the notebooks are in poor condition, consisting of loose collections of signatures, split bindings and missing covers, making it impossible to determine the actual number of surviving notebooks. Inside, some of the entries are handwritten lists, as exemplified by the lower image, while other are pasted-in cuttings from newspapers, 'Blue Books', and other printed sources mainly dated after the late 1870s.

⁵² TWA, letters from Alexander Strahan, 8 and 18 May 1885, 2 June 1885.

⁵³ TWA, letter from Mrs Tanner, 19 February 1884; letters from Mrs Cruikshank, 21 December 1884 and 27 January 1886.



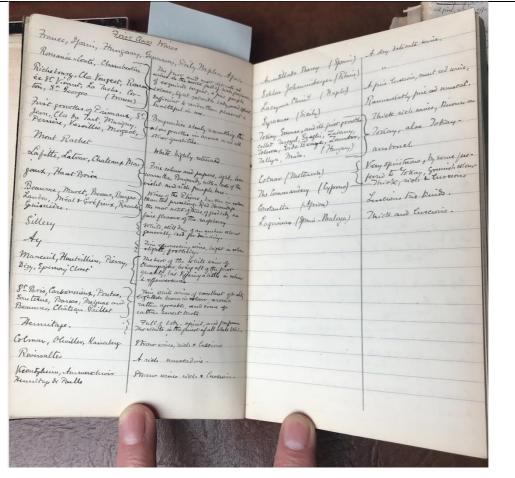


Fig.2 Images of undated Whitaker notebooks

The loss of the Whitaker archive has robbed historians of what would have been one of the richest sources of book trade history and has necessitated reliance on third party accounts of Whitaker and his life, some of which are contradictory or incorrectly recorded, such as conflicting details in obituaries of his early days as a bookseller. The loss of the business papers means that few of Whitaker's own words or views remain other than those preserved in his publications. Without personal letters to furnish insights into the private world of the man or documentary evidence of the plans for his publications, this study has had to rely on other information from the family, those who knew him, and those who did not. These include an article outlining the origins of the almanack by Cuthbert Whitaker, later editor of Whitaker's Almanack, published in 1949.⁵⁴ Other personal items include the 1862 lease on the house in Enfield that Whitaker subsequently purchased, and an album of newspaper obituaries. Entries are often brief but supply details not found elsewhere, such as a paragraph from 'a correspondent' in Book and News Trades Gazette who used to see him in church and described him as a 'recluse' who shut himself in his library and appearing only at mealtimes.⁵⁵ Public records have also been scrutinised for details of Whitaker's personal life including his will, marriage certificates, a petition for judicial separation on Whitaker's part, and a petition for the restitution of conjugal rights by his wife. A search was undertaken for Whitaker's financial records. His bankers were the City Bank, now part of HSBC, but the archivist could find no trace of his business in their records. David Whitaker, the penultimate managing director of J. Whitaker & Sons and the great grandson of the founder, agreed to two long interviews for this research and recounted family stories and memories of the early years of the business.⁵⁶

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⁵⁴ TWA, Cuthbert Whitaker, 'The History of Whitaker's Almanack', ASLIB Proceedings, 1, 2 (1949), 113-18.

⁵⁵ TWA, Obituaries, *Books and News Trades Gazette*, 25 May 1895.

⁵⁶ David Whitaker took much interest in this project and gave permission for quotations and information to be used but sadly did not see the final results as he died in August 2021 just as it reached completion.

Despite these limitations, one of the aims of this study was to recover as much information as possible about Whitaker's life and family in order to understand and contextualise the business and personal decisions he made. Alistair McCleery has argued that some historians of print culture have placed too great an emphasis on 'the mass movement of history' and too little on 'the influence and actions of the individual', ignoring the possibility of idealistic, idiosyncratic, or even confounding motivations behind business decisions.⁵⁷ James Raven also argues for the necessity of understanding the personalities of publishers, attributing their editorial decisions not merely to commercial imperatives but also to their personal tastes and views, be they religious, political or literary.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, in Whitaker's case little evidence remains in his own publications or in contemporary accounts by his peers with which to better understand the man. Edward Marston of *The Publishers*' Circular included a brief biographical sketch of Whitaker in his memoirs, After Work (1904), but, despite admitting he knew Whitaker well, the account lends little more detail than the obituaries.⁵⁹ Similarly, Henry Curwen's *Booksellers of Olden Times* (1873) notes that Whitaker worked for J. H. Parker and started *The Bookseller* but provides no further insights into the man's qualities or characteristics.⁶⁰

Whitaker has also largely disappeared from the archives of his former employers and peers. All records of his time working for J. H. Parker were destroyed when the firm, 'in a fit of patriotism', sent its archive off as salvage during the 1914-18 war.⁶¹ Longmans absorbed J. W. Parker's business in 1863 but a search of the Longman archive in Reading revealed nothing about Whitaker's short time there. He features only occasionally in the archives of

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⁵⁷ Alistair McCleery, 'The Return of the Publisher to Book History: The Case of Allen Lane', *Book History*, 5 (2002), 161-85, (p.162).

⁵⁸ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.349.

⁵⁹ Edward Marston, *After Work: Fragments from the Workshop of an Old Publisher* (London: William Heinemann, 1904), pp.78-81.

⁶⁰ Henry Curwen, *A History of Booksellers the Old and the New* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1873), p.316 and p.463.

⁶¹ TWA, Letter to Edgar Whitaker from Parker and Son, 9 December 1946.

other publishers, such as a note written to John Murray in 1873 suggesting Murrays publish a book on the battlefields of the world.⁶²

Fortunately, early archival searches made for this study unearthed a rare successful find, a fleeting glimpse of Whitaker in a small cache of letters in the archives of publisher John Taylor, publisher of poets such as John Keats and John Clare. The letters reveal an interesting if odd incident that suggests that Whitaker's publishing interests may have briefly reached beyond trade and reference publishing. An exchange of correspondence with Taylor shows Whitaker's interest in acquiring the copyrights of Clare, ostensibly in an effort to assist the stricken Clare family after the poet's death in 1864.⁶³ Taylor and Whitaker agreed that a new edition of Clare's poems would be published in 1864 with Whitaker writing that 'I think something may be done for the family.'64 Further volumes were to follow. Taylor died before this agreement could be signed so another was drafted with Clare's widow Martha, the heir to her husband's estate, for Whitaker to pay £70 for the copyright in all Clare's work in fourteen half-yearly instalments:

In consideration of the Agreement entered into by Mr Whitaker in this letter and of the payment to us of the further sum of Five pounds we hereby agree to transfer to him all our interest actual and contingent in the copyright of the works published and unpublished of the late John Clare.⁶⁵

The document was signed by Martha and witnessed by three of her children. ⁶⁶ Clare's work was not popular at this time, and his unpublished manuscripts needed a great deal of editorial input before they could be re-published, so it is difficult to understand Whitaker's interest. There are no other reports of Whitaker attempting to publish imaginative literature or poetry,

⁶² Letter to John Murray, 23 April 1873, John Murray Archive, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland,

⁶³ No evidence could be found to explain why Whitaker made the connection with the Clare family.

⁶⁴ Letters to John Taylor, 22 and 26 October 1863, John Clare archive, Northampton, Northampton Records

⁶⁵ H. T. Kirby, 'John Clare', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 March 1935, p.143. Kirby had been given access to the Whitaker papers some years prior to writing the article.

⁶⁶ Kirby, p.143.

and this incident remains an anomaly, but his actions to secure some financial stability for Clare's family are consistent with initiatives he instigated in *The Bookseller* to support members of the book trade and their families in financial distress.

Definitions and methods

Early in the Victorian period the definition of a 'book' was established by the 1842 Copyright Law Amendment Act in the following manner:

The word 'book' shall be construed to mean and include every volume, part of a volume, pamphlet, sheet of letter-press, sheet of music, map, chart, or plan separately published.⁶⁷

For the purposes of this thesis, 'book' is defined as in the 1842 Act as that was the legal framework that governed the operations of booksellers and publishers. References to the Victorian 'book trade' will align with Feather's broad definition: 'the trade in writing, manufacture, distribution and sale of books of all genres and formats, broadsides, magazines and newspapers'. As demonstrated in this thesis, the boundaries of the book trade and the types of traders who were permitted to sell books was a matter of dispute so this description of the commercial activity rather than of the personnel is appropriate. By Whitaker's time, the roles within the book trade had specialised into their now familiar categories: a bookseller was someone, usually male, who retailed books and other items as his main means of living. However, books were also sold by other traders such as newsvendors, music sellers, and general stores as well as by street hawkers. Some booksellers also produced their own

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⁶⁷ Copyright Law Amendment Act 1842, 5 & 6 Vict. c.45 sect. 2.

⁶⁸ Feather, 'Book Trade Networks and Community Contexts', p.16.

⁶⁹ A note in the November 1858 issue of *The Bookseller* (p.591) that Mrs Hatchard was taking over her husband's business in Piccadilly was a rare mention of a female bookseller. Women did work in the book trade, primarily in the bookselling, stationery and fancy trades, and in binderies. According to the 1861 census, reported in *The Bookseller* in February 1864, p.91, nearly 12% of the trade's workforce were female (952 women compared to 7202 men). The journal later noted that numbers of female staff was 'large' in October 1871, p.809. See Chapter Six for further details of new research on the role of women in the Victorian trade.

publications.⁷⁰ Publishers, again overwhelmingly male, were now understood by their role as investors in copyrights, assuming the financial risk for producing an edition of a work and arranging distribution for the printed copies. Publishers set the retail price for their books and negotiated trade allowances with wholesalers and retailers. Some publishers also retained bookselling operations and retailed books from other publishers. Examples include Alexander Macmillan of Macmillan & Co., who opened his publishing office in London in 1857 whilst retaining his bookshop in Cambridge, and John Chapman at 142 Strand.⁷¹

The study is based on close reading and historical analysis of key printed texts and a previously unexamined archive. It follows a broadly chronological timeline to analyse and evaluate the impact of Whitaker and his publications on a book trade in the process of transforming into a modern mass market. His early publications were scrutinised to discern a characteristic editorial style and purpose. The key titles, *The Bookseller*, *Whitaker's Almanack*, and *The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature* were examined in greater details.

To fully understand the type, range, and scope of the information circulated by *The Bookseller*, all the available issues spanning the years 1858 to 1895 plus the special 50th anniversary issue in January 1908 were closely read and noted. Sampling the issues could have meant that key editorial interventions or revealing reader comments might be missed. The regular features were noted along with significant dates and events, and unusual or notable occurrences. Representative news stories were examined to discern patterns of continuity and change over time and to identify the characteristics of Whitaker's journalism. The information was entered on a spreadsheet, organised by date and page number. The

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⁷⁰ For instance, Hatchards of Piccadilly published their own gift books in the 1870s such as *The Shakespeare Birthday Book*, see *The Bookseller*, March 1875, p.250, and *The Captivity of the Children of Israel* for the Christmas market, see August 1875, p.704.

⁷¹ The combination of these functions was common; as shown in the next chapter, all of Whitaker's employers, Barritts, J. W. Parker, and J. H. Parker, were both publishers and booksellers.

entries themselves consisted of notes and summaries of the news stories, features, announcements, references to editorial interventions, and quotations that were subsequently referenced throughout the thesis. The final version of the spreadsheet contained just over 1300 rows.

Year	Month	Page	Entry
1858	Jan	1	17 Warwick Sq129 publishers listed as listing their 'complete lists of works recently issued', [ie their front list]
1858	Jan	2	'This work is intended primarily for the use of Booksellers and Publishers, furnishing them with a handy book of reference, and doing for the Bookselling trade what <i>Bradshaw</i> does for the Railways, but so conducted that it may be equally useful to the Book-buyer and to the Bookseller' No proprietor listed on front or back pages (or anywhere else).
1858	Jan	2	Published on 23 rd each month in time for the trade to order their monthly parcels. Ads to be sent not later than 20 th [ie ads are set and printed within 3 days]. Subscription 3s per annum, delivered post-free, single copy 4d
1858	Jan	3	Sampson Low deputed on behalf of the London trade to NY to discuss British books in America. Concern about payments and length of credit periods. Quoted from Athenaeum article
1858	Jan	3	International copyright definitions accepted by NY publishers – UK authors shall have copyright in US for 14 years if 3 months notice of intention to have US copyright given and as long as book is published within 30 days of UK. Must be published by a US citizen, registered in US, printed on American paper and bound in US. Books only, not periodicals. US authors in UK to have similar terms

Table 1 Examples of entries in spreadsheet created for content of *The Bookseller*

An attempt to add codes to the spreadsheet was made in the early stages but many of the entries contained information that could be added to multiple categories and it became clear that classifying the entries too narrowly ran the risk of obscuring the richness and variety of the journalism. This would also result in a spreadsheet that was too unwieldy to be useful as either an analytical or reference tool. Without the coding, the spreadsheet instead became a searchable repository and *aide memoire* of the contents of *The Bookseller* from 1858 to 1895.

The process of marshalling and analysing the content of the journal and interpreting the findings took 2 years and involved a number of false starts. Many topics, such as underselling and copyright infringement, made regular appearances over the decades making a simple chronological perspective too repetitive, so it was rejected in favour of a thematic

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 $^{^{72}}$ It was instructive that Freebury created more than 100 main heading for the indexes he compiled for 2 years of *The Bookseller*, see Freebury, Introduction to *Bookseller* indexes, p.7.

approach. The first attempt organised the journalism under headings provided by the observation in *The City Press* that the new trade journals had been created for the purposes of 'intercommunication, mutual defence of interests, diffusion of intelligence, and [...] the improvement [...] of the particular branch of commerce'. However, this approach was not broad enough as the descriptions failed to capture the full range and scope of the service provided by the journal, and neglected some important aspects such as the editor's role as an influence on trade discourse and activities.

Eventually, an appropriate structure was formulated. The research suggested that *The Bookseller* was the blueprint and archetype for a new kind of trade publication, so it was necessary to analyse both its form and its contents. The results were split into 2 chapters. The first chapter examined the structure of the journal and its constituent sections while the second scrutinised the nature and purposes of the editorial content. After an introductory analysis of Whitaker's new style of trade journalism, the findings were divided into 4 broad themes: the promotion of opportunities; provision of guidance to customs and conventions; monitoring trade activities and highlighting threats; and efforts to foster a sense of community amongst booksellers. Together, these themes encapsulated the essential functions of the journal and addressed Whitaker's editorial intentions and actions.

A similar breakdown of the structure of *Whitaker's Almanack* was not required as although it was updated every year, the format and categories of information in each volume remained largely unchanged until the end of the century. In contrast, catalogues in *The Reference Catalogue* varied in each edition. The publishers' names and locations within London or nationally were plotted on a spreadsheet, including any change of name or legal status, and their frequency of appearance and whether they had submitted a catalogue or advertisement was noted. A selection of the rival journals, *Bent's* and *The Publishers'*

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⁷³ City Press, 26 November 1859, p.6.

Circular, were also sampled to provide a comparison to the type and range of information offered by Whitaker's own journal.

Darnton's influential 'communication circuit' which models the transmission of a notional book from author to reader as it passes through the production and distribution processes. The circuit is set in a commercial environment simplified by Darnton into three categories and positioned in the middle of the circuit: 'economic and social conjuncture'; 'political and legal sanctions; and 'intellectual influences and publicity'. In this model, Whitaker's publications would travel around the theoretical circuit and be exposed to the same structural forces operating in the commercial environment. However, his trade titles, particularly *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue*, also had a role in influencing both the circuit itself and the surrounding environment. The information service they provided was designed to strengthen the ability of the agents on the circuit - the publishers, booksellers, and allied traders - to negotiate with each other, to alter the power relations between traders, and to help them better understand and even modify the structural forces that operated on their businesses.

Darnton's model has been criticised by Adams and Barker, amongst others, for failing to address many of the events in the life cycle of a book such as the re-purposing and metamorphosing of texts when included in compilations or re-written for adaptations.⁷⁶ It overlooks important elements of trade activity such as reprinting and returns, but Darnton's 1982 essay, along with the follow up article published in 2007, was also an exhortation for

⁷⁴ Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?, *Daedalus*, 111, 3 (1982), 65-83, (p.68).

⁷⁵ Darnton, p.68.

⁷⁶ Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker, 'A New Model for the Study of the Book, *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. by Nicholas Barker (London: The British Library, 1993), 5-43. For more recent approaches that include aspects of the effects of digital publication see Caroline Davis, *Print Cultures: A Reader in Theory and Practice* (London: Springer Nature, 2019); Padmini Ray Murray and Claire Squires, 'The Digital Communications Circuit', *Book* 2.0, 3, 1, (2013), 3-24.

 $[\]underline{https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/17181/9/The Digital Publishing Communications Circuit.pdf} \ [accessed\ 27\ July\ 2021].$

more research to be undertaken on aspects of the circuit, on the activities of 'book people', some of which are addressed in this thesis. These questions, amongst many others, were regularly addressed in The Bookseller and contribute to a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the everyday activities of the book people, their social and intellectual world, the frictions and tensions that arose between them, and the precarity of their livelihoods.

The theories of cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his theory of the field of cultural production or 'the market for symbolic goods', have attracted scholars of book history and print culture seeking to analyse the systems of power that govern relations between agents of literary production, primarily authors, publishers, reviewers, and later literary agents. The dynamics of the field are influenced by a variety of forms of power or capital such as economic capital (financial resources), social capital (membership of social networks within the field), cultural capital (knowledge of the rules of the field), and symbolic capital (prestige or status within the field). Although bookselling is primarily a commercial enterprise and is entrepreneurial by nature, some of his ideas can be applied to an examination of Whitaker's efforts and achievements. In an essay called 'The Market for Symbolic Goods' Bourdieu divides the field of cultural production into two sub-fields: the

⁷⁷ Darnton 'What is the History of Books?', pp.75-81; Darnton, "What is the History of Books" revisited', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4, 3 (2007), 495–508, (p.504).

⁷⁸ Darnton 'What is the History of Books?', p.77-78.

⁷⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Market for Symbolic Goods', trans. by Richard Nice, *Poetics*, 14, (1985), 13-44, (p.13). See also Caroline Davis, 'Introduction', *Print Cultures: A Reader in Theory and Practice*, ed. by Caroline Davis (London: Springer Nature, 2019), pp.15-20; John Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-first Century*, Second edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), pp.1-14; Leslie Howsam, *Old Books & New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book & Print Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp.28-45; Peter D. McDonald, *Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.1-21.

field of restricted production (FRP) and the field of large-scale production (FLP).⁸⁰ In the former category monetary considerations are secondary to other values such as prestige or legitimacy, and writers and publishers could benefit from producing culturally important products. In the latter, symbolic value mattered far less if at all.⁸¹ In both fields, the acquisition of types of capital impart to the agents operating in the field different forms of power.

In the 'field' of Victorian bookselling, the balance of power lay with the leading London publishers, who set retail prices, controlled the distribution of their books and, until 1852, dominated the Booksellers' Association. By providing information and creating a communication system for booksellers and other less powerful actors within the trade, Whitaker shared with his readers the social, cultural, and symbolic capital he had accumulated as a bookseller and in his role as the editor of trade publications. The willingness to share his own capital with others was also good business as it reinforced readers' trust in his expertise and authority and earned their loyalty as subscribers.

Bourdieu's cultural theories are less applicable for the bookselling trade itself, however. In the context of this study, books are less cultural products than commercial ones and booksellers had to operate in the FLP, confronting the harsh realities of transacting in a market economy in order to remain in business. Peter D. McDonald has argued that Bourdieu's FRP does not allow sufficiently for economism, the idea that economic determinants might be considered more important than cultural or aesthetic ones, where value, such as for booksellers, is measured in economic not cultural terms. A more fruitful approach for analysing the diverse range of activities of the Victorian book trade as it

⁸⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Market for Symbolic Goods', trans. by Richard Nice, *Poetics*, 14, (1985), 13-44, (p.13).

⁸¹ Bourdieu, p.13.

⁸² McDonald, pp.113-14.

wrestled with the challenges of an emerging mass-market is to consider it as a particular kind of business network, a supply chain. In publishing terms this is defined as:

the system of interconnected processes and people involved in the production and distribution of a product. In the book trade, the supply chain can be from publisher directly to retailer, or through intermediaries like distributors or wholesalers to the retailer.⁸³

The term itself may be anachronistic for the Victorian period but the description is apt and represents the various stages along which a book passes from the publisher's warehouse to the booksellers' shelves before reaching its ultimate destination in a customer's hands.

Feather points out that many scholars have assumed that the book trade was a networked community 'whilst actually describing it as a supply chain'. 84 Even in the first half of the nineteenth century the trade was less a community and more 'a mass of conflicting and competing interests' that was intensified by the increased competition in the second half of the century. 85 By Whitaker's time, this supply chain consisted of a complex web of publishers of different sizes, wholesalers, bulk buyers and national distributors such as W. H. Smith, reading societies and commercial circulating libraries, as well as around 6,000 local booksellers of varying sizes in towns and cities across the country. 86 These were not members of a self-conscious trading community but rather a collection of individuals in asymmetric business relationships making what Raven describes as 'a series of commercial transactions over different products involving different merchants, manufacturers, processors, finishers, wholesale and retail distributors, circulation agents, and contractual and open market consumers'. 87 Each of the transactions implies complex relationships between merchants and

⁸³ Oxford Dictionary of Publishing, https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780191863592.001.0001/acref-9780191863592-e-228?rskey=ubVRns&result=1 [accessed 20 May 2020].

⁸⁴ Feather, 'Book Trade Networks and Community Contexts', p.14.

⁸⁵ Feather, 'Book Trade Networks and Community Contexts', p.23.

⁸⁶ Thomas Hodson, *Hodson's Booksellers, Publishers and Stationers Directory 1855* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographic Society, 1972)

⁸⁷ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.4.

traders, suppliers and customers, and repeated negotiations that had a reasonable likelihood of disagreement and misunderstanding. These business relationships could be temporary and last for one transaction only or might be sustained over many years.

The book trade was a largely closed, inter-dependent system; the publishers needed the booksellers as much as the retailers needed the publishers. Wholesalers and bulk buyers such as libraries negotiated terms based on the volume they acquired and were usually more advantageous than those offered to individual booksellers. The balance of power between the parties was uneven. Individual booksellers had little influence in relation to the big London houses, but publishers could usually only start to recoup their investment in an edition when the copies were sold, whether to wholesalers, bulk buyers, libraries, or retailers. Framing the book trade as a supply chain allows for competition as well as cooperation, for disagreements and reversals. A supply chain moves goods in more than one direction and accommodates the possibility of faulty or incorrect goods that had to be returned. It is also a conduit of commercial information such as business intelligence and gossip that, if collected, verified and circulated, would be valuable to other traders along the chain.

The nature of the supply chain can be explored further by borrowing techniques and concepts developed by scholars working in organisation studies such as Mark Casson and Mark Granovetter. Business networks developed trust between traders and enabled the exchange of products, services, and finances. Casson's research suggests that using networks to create trust between and amongst individuals in business encouraged social bonds, reduced the costs of sharing information and improved its quality. ⁸⁸ The essence of a network was the trust between its members and the moral as well as material obligations between them. ⁸⁹ For Casson, networks were 'essentially an institutional alternative to the market and the firm'. ⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Mark Casson, *Information and Organisation: A New Perspective on the Theory of the Firm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.117.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.118.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.118

By providing everyone with the same information, trust could grow, social bonds could be strengthened, and compromises in the interests of the greater good could be easier to broker. Pearson and Richardson concluded that business networks reduced the cost not only of commercial transactions but also the cost of accessing the information needed to negotiate and enforce contracts, determine business strategy, monitor the competition and assess the market for their goods. As illustrated in later chapters, trust between members of the book trade was in short supply; developing better relations within the trade was one of the outcomes Whitaker wished to achieve with *The Bookseller*.

Another economic theory relevant to Whitaker's work is Mark Granovetter's idea of 'the strength of weak ties' in which social systems, for example trusted networks and communities, are fortified and made more resilient by access to information from a wide range of sources, from acquaintances and business colleagues rather than just from family and close friends. Without the information that these 'weak ties' contribute, such as access to the latest ideas and fashions, social groups can become too homogenous, turning into sclerotic echo chambers that are unable to innovate or respond appropriately to change. Has this thesis argues, Whitaker sought to provide the most useful information for his busy readers and drew on a wide range of personal and printed sources. For *The Bookseller* this involved publishing letters, news stories and trade gossip from home and abroad with commentary and opinions supplied by lowly assistants and heads of leading publishing houses, from trade insiders to un-named small inventors selling new products. For the almanack, it meant gathering information from experts in several fields. However, Casson concluded that a network or community does not have 'a will of its own', and, as Whitaker

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.118-121.

⁹² Robin Pearson and David Richardson, 'Business Networking in the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 54, 4 (2001), 657-679, (p.658).

⁹³ Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 6 (1973), 1360-1390, and 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited', *Sociological Theory*, 1 (1983), 201-233. ⁹⁴ Granovetter, 'Revisited', p.215.

realised, a trading community required additional external mechanisms in the form of trade associations if much-needed reforms were to be debated, agreed, and implemented.⁹⁵

In 2015 Simon Eliot proposed that Book History as a discipline should be expanded beyond its historical focus on imaginative literature, that the net should be 'recast' to include an examination of the systems of transport and transmission used in the distribution of all kinds of books, and to understand the effect of 'the shaping power of economics and technology'. ⁹⁶ Eliot suggests that categorising Book History as a subset of the History of Communication allows for broader and deeper explorations of, amongst other things, the processes involved in making and distributing books as well as the production and circulation of non-literary texts and information, what he coined as 'the ecology of communication'. ⁹⁷ Whitaker's publications were a deliberate attempt to improve the communication systems for a trade that was undergoing profound social, economic, and technological change. By analysing the functions and impacts of these publications, the following chapters demonstrate not only that Whitaker himself was 'a part of the system of things', as memorialised by *The St James's Gazette*, but that, as the 'mechanic' to the book trade, his legacy remains discernible in the communication and information systems that still underpin the publishing industry today.

⁹⁵ M. C. Casson, 'An Economic Approach to Regional Business Networks', in *Industrial Clusters*, ed. by John F. Wilson and Andrew Popp (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp.19-43, (p.21).

⁹⁶ Simon Eliot, 'Recasting Book History', School of Advanced Study, University of London, July 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1C3-LbwVDO, 14m 20s; 16m 6s. [Accessed 21 February 2021]. ⁹⁷ Eliot, 'Recasting', 39m 50s.

Chapter Two 'The Want of the Time': Publishing and Bookselling in the 1850s

Introduction

From the vantage point of the 50th issue of *The Bookseller* in April 1866, Whitaker reminded his readers why the journal had been a necessary initiative. His original reasoning had been that the trade needed a new kind of publication that would not only function as an advertiser for publishers to display their new titles but also an independent information service to circulate business intelligence to subscribers, a journal that would represent the interests of the bookselling trade as a whole:

The want of the time was a journal representing the feelings and opinions of the trade; recording information of all with impartiality, and entirely free from the trammels of any publishing house or special connection.¹

His understanding of the need for such a publication was formed by his own experiences of having been apprenticed to a bookseller as a child and having worked as an assistant in a London bookshop for nearly twenty years. The book trade changed a great deal over that period, steadily metamorphosing into a steam-powered industry with a considerably expanded printing capacity and an increasingly competitive business culture. Wide-ranging social changes and rising rates of literacy, improved communication technologies, and a growing economy helped to stimulate the demand for books, and it is in these contexts that Whitaker's experiences should be considered.

Book historians have highlighted the importance of considering what William St Clair called the 'political economy of reading', of analysing the structures of the economic, social and political systems that shaped the processes of book production.² These structural forces

¹ BKS, April 1866, p.295.

² William St Clair, 'The Political Economy of Reading', The John Coffin Memorial Lecture in the History of the Book, revised edition October 2012, School of Advanced Study University of London, p.5. See also Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, p.3.

are also closely related to the interconnected areas labelled in Darnton's diagram of the communication circuit as 'Intellectual influences and publicity, Economic and Social Conjuncture, and Political and Legal Sanctions'. This chapter includes an overview of the conditions of bookselling in the 1850s to provide the context for Whitaker's early experiences in the book trade and his unsuccessful first attempts in business prior to the launch of *The Bookseller* in 1858.

Early life and apprenticeship 1820-40

Joseph Whitaker was born in Shoreditch, London on 4 May 1820, the youngest of three children of Thomas Whitaker, a silversmith, and his wife Mary. He was baptized on the 5 September 1820 at the St Luke's Tabernacle, a non-conformist chapel on City Road, also in Shoreditch.⁴ His father made flatware as a manufacturing silversmith who was successful enough to have been granted his own assay mark by 1841.⁵ The family lived in the parish of St Leonard's in Shoreditch, a densely populated part of London inhabited by a mixture of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled families, 'clerks, warehousemen, shopkeepers, mechanics and labourers'.⁶ The area was lower-middle class but the residents were deemed to be 'very healthy' with 'temperate' habits. Families lived on a good diet of 'meat, bread and potatoes' with enough wealth to keep fires in the winter although the high density of the population

³ Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', p.68.

⁴ London, The National Archives (TNA), *Registers of Birth, Marriages and Deaths surrendered to the Non-Parochial Registers Commissions of 1837 and 1857*; Class: RG 4; Piece: 4262.

⁵ TWA, Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.113. http://www.silvermakersmarks.co.uk/Makers/London-TS-TZ.html [accessed 30 July 2021]

⁶ Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, in England, 1843, HCPP, http://parlipapers.proquest.com:80/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1843-020918?accountid=14511 [accessed 30 July 2021]. Whitaker's father and step-mother were still living in the area in 1841. He was visiting the night of the 1841 census, when he was 21 years old. The family, whose name was misspelt as "Whetaker', were living in Walbrook Row.

meant that there were outbreaks of smallpox, measles and dysentery as well as of epidemic diseases such as cholera and typhus.⁷

Whitaker's mother died when he was of 'school leaving age' in 1833, possibly from one of the epidemic diseases.⁸ His father quickly remarried and shortly afterwards his new step-mother, Susan Prior, 'offered no opposition' to the thirteen year old's departure from the family home.⁹ The extent of his schooling is not known but he was literate and described as having 'an insatiable passion for books' that set the course for the rest of his life.¹⁰ Rather than follow his father into the silver trade, he was apprenticed to the 'Bible establishment' of a Mr Barritt, a bookseller, wholesaler, and binder in Fleet Street.¹¹ He was initially apprenticed to learn the bookbinding trade but Barritt believed him to have 'superior qualities', in addition to his passion for books, and soon trusted him with the responsibility of working in the bookshop.¹²

Little is known about his time with Barritt but a bookseller's apprentice in the 1830s was expected to contribute a payment of between £50 and £100, a considerable sum if Barritt had insisted on the payment. Bookbinders paid a lower sum of around £50. Those with ambitions to be bound to the more prestigious houses needed substantial financial backing and a far higher premium of between £100 to £500. These youths were also advised that, unless they were likely to come into a considerable sum of money or property and were already wealthy, they should not try to enter the top tier as these men were considered gentlemen rather than mere tradesmen:

⁷ Fifth Annual Report, p.290.

⁸ TWA, Cuthbert Whitaker, ASLIB, p.113.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ TWA, Obituary Book, *Athenaeum*, 18 May 1895 states that he was with Barritt for ten years which would have made him 23 when he left, but Cuthbert states that his father was with J. H. Parker in Oxford when he was 21 years old (*ASLIB*, p.113). Many of the dates in the obituaries contradict each other and must be treated with caution

¹² BKS, 'Fifty Years of *The Bookseller* and Bookselling', Jubilee Number, January 1908, p.9.

¹³ Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade* (London: George Allen and Unwin, third edition, 1974), p.368.

¹⁴ Plant, p.367.

A youth desirous of becoming a Bookseller and Publisher of the first class, should have a good classical and commercial education, a clear and comprehensive understanding and a gentlemanly appearance and address, as he will in the course of business occasionally come in contact with the most talented and influential characters in the community.¹⁵

Given Whitaker's modest background as a silversmith's son, his ambitions had to be more modest.

A bookseller's assistant's work was arduous. Scottish bookseller John Menzies remembered his days as an apprentice as full of 'drudgery and discomfort'. Amongst the jobs he was expected to carry out were: washing the stairs and sweeping the pavement outside; cleaning the windows; collecting incoming stock from the coach or train, unpacking and shelving the copies; wrapping and delivering books to local customers; sourcing requested titles; logging sales and keeping the accounts books; and keeping business correspondence. Robert Bowes remembered working in the Cambridge bookshop of his uncles, Daniel and Alexander Macmillan, as a young man in the 1840s with duties that included dusting books and delivering purchased items to customers throughout the town. Hours were long; starting at 7am, apprentices could work fourteen-hour days six days a week, not finishing until the shop closed at 10pm. Whitaker's capacity for assuming responsibility and his passion for books may have taken him from the bindery into the bookshop but his superior qualities also included a willingness to work hard with 'an untiring industry and a determination to make his way in the world'. 20

During his apprenticeship, Whitaker may have resided with the Barritt family or lived as an outdoor apprentice in rooms nearby. Indoor boys received wages of £5 or £6 a year but

¹⁸ Robert Bowes, 'Cambridge Bookshops and Booksellers 1846-1858', text of talk given to the Cambridge Assistant Booksellers' Association, 17 June 1912 (privately printed, 1912), p.5.

¹⁹ Bowes, pp.5-6.

¹⁵ Nathaniel Whittock et al, *The Complete Book of Trades* (London: John Bennett, 1837), p.42.

¹⁶ Leslie Gardiner, *The Making of John Menzies* (Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1983), p.9.

¹⁷ Menzies, p.9.

²⁰ TWA, Cuthbert Whitaker, p.113.

those who lived out could receive 4s a week to begin with, rising throughout their apprenticeship to £1 a week, a comfortable sum for a young single man.²¹ There may also have been some opportunities for overtime in order to build up earnings and, as he neared the end of his apprenticeship, opportunities for additional wages would have been important as he saved towards his forthcoming marriage.

Marriage and responsibility 1840-1852

In 1840, with his apprenticeship completed, Whitaker was now free to marry.²² On 26 November 1840, Whitaker married Ann Norris at the Registry Office of the Strand Union.²³ Surviving records do not indicate how or when they met and why they decided to marry so soon after the end of his apprenticeship. He remained at Barritt's but, according to his marriage certificate, had been promoted to a clerk and now lived at 63 Stanhope Street, a raffish area near Drury Lane and close to Barritt's premises in Fleet Street.²⁴ The daughter of a cabinet maker, Ann was three years older than her new husband.²⁵ Their first child, Joseph Vernon Whitaker, was born on 3 February 1845, followed by two daughters, Anna Maria in July 1846, and Jessie in April 1848. Although he was married with a family of his own, he remained in contact with his father in Shoreditch. He was at his father's home on census night 1841, and his first two children were baptized in the area in 1846.²⁶

²¹ Plant, p.370.

²² Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.99.

²³ TWA, Genealogist's research into Whitaker family (GRWF), p.2.

²⁴ Details of marriage certificate on Werelate website.

http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Joseph_Whitaker_%289%29 [accessed 30 July 2021].

²⁵ TNA, PRO, H.O.107/1511, Census 1851, Joseph Whitaker. Ann is listed as being 35 years old to Joseph's 32 years. However, Ann's death certificate states that she was 42 at her death in 1853, making her five years older than previously stated. It has not been possible to trace her birth certificate.

²⁶ Church of England Births and Baptisms 1841-49, Parish of St Leonard's, Shoreditch, Middlesex, p.43; Baptism Certificate for Joseph Vernon and Anna Maria, dated 25 September 1846.

Sometime in 1843, Whitaker left Barritt to join John William Parker, a bookseller and publisher at 445 Strand and located at the other end of the Strand from Barritt's bookshop. The Strand was London's foremost shopping street and an important link between Westminster Abbey and Parliament in the western part of London and the City of London in the east.²⁷ It was a busy, noisy thoroughfare, famous for 'the roar, the din, and the bustle, and agitation of wheels, and horses, and men'. 28 Parker's immediate neighbours sold a variety of products primarily for the middle-classes and included linen drapers, map makers, hat-makers and wig-makers, and specialist retailers of shellfish, Italian oil, and tea.²⁹ The street had strong literary ties with several respectable writers, booksellers and publishers nearby, including Charles Dickens, Henry Mayhew, and G. W. M. Reynolds in Wellington Street. There were also newspapers, publishers, and booksellers such as John Chapman at 142 Strand, Chapman and Hall at number 186, and *The Illustrated London News* at number 198. The cosmopolitan nature of the area extended to Holywell Street and Wych Street at the east end of the Strand where the insalubrious, seditious, and pornographic texts sold by booksellers and publishers clustered there could not have escaped Whitaker's notice and added a worldly, if not necessarily welcome, dimension to his education in the range and variety of bookselling activities.³⁰

J. W. Parker ran a substantial publishing business that included a print shop around the corner in St Martin's Lane. The general list focused on popular science, natural science, education, literature and children's books, and reflected an interest in social reform and educative works for the intelligent reader such as works by the anti-slavery campaigners

²⁷ Rosemary Ashton, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006), p.3.

²⁸ George Reynolds quoted in Mary L Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street: The Print Culture of a Victorian Street* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015), p.52.

²⁹ Ashton, p.3. and p.6.

³⁰ Shannon, pp.57-58.

Thomas Clarkson, George Henry Lewes, and John Stuart Mill.³¹ He was publisher for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and produced its penny magazine, *Saturday Magazine*. Strong links to Cambridge had been forged after he was elected Printer to the University of Cambridge in 1836.³² Whether by accident or design, Parker's association with Cambridge placed Whitaker at the crossroads of one of the most important intellectual and spiritual controversies of the time, the resurgence of the Church of England. From the 1830s, a religious war raged between three competing forces within the Anglican Church and the tensions between the Evangelicals, Broad Church liberals, and the Catholic sympathies of the Oxford Movement were vividly displayed in print in a torrent of books, pamphlets and newspapers.³³

Cambridge was a centre of the Broad Church movement and Parker published works by many of its key proponents such as F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and William Whewell. He was this aspect of Parker's list that appealed to Whitaker, he left the Strand after only a few months, suggesting that perhaps his spiritual home lay elsewhere. On the other hand, the reason may have been simpler; Parker had recently brought his son, also called John William, into the business, and Whitaker's labour may have been no longer required. The younger Parker was the same age as Whitaker and his presence would have ended any long-term prospects of advancement so, sometime in 1844, Whitaker left London to work for another Parker, John Henry Parker in Oxford's Broad Street. Whatever the reason, Whitaker's move sixty miles to Oxford was a symbolic crossing of the theological divide from Broad Church to High Church, and was to be a turning point in his life. Where J. W. Parker's list reflected a sympathy for liberal Christianity, J. H. Parker was associated with

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³¹ Ruth Richardson, *The Making of Mr Gray's Anatomy: Bodies, Books, Fortune, Fame* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.64 and p.74.

³² Richardson, pp.63-65.

³³ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.8.

³⁴ David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press, Volume Two: Scholarship and Commerce 1698-1872* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.329-30 and p.353. See also Richardson, p.70.

the conservative tendencies of the Anglican High Church and it is tempting to see Whitaker's move to Oxford as related to his own religious conversion to Anglicanism. There is only circumstantial evidence for Whitaker's conversion but by 1846 his two children were baptized at St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch rather than in the nearby Tabernacle in which he himself had been baptized.³⁵

Parkers was the mecca of Oxford bookshops, founded in 1814 by Joseph Parker, who became a privileged bookseller (*bibliopola privilegiatus*) and distribution agent for the University Press. The business passed to his nephew and former apprentice John Henry Parker in 1832, also a *bibliopola privilegiatus* and later Warehouse Keeper and Agent for the Learned side of the University Press. ³⁶ The responsibilities of the Warehouse Keeper and Agent included organising the publishing operations of the Learned Press' list of scholarly titles, selling these titles in Oxford, London and beyond, and overseeing the warehouse for Press titles in Oxford. ³⁷ Joseph and later J. H. Parker published works by members of the Oxford Movement, also known as Tractarians, such as John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey and John Keble, whose influential collection of devotional poetry, *The Christian Year*, they published in 1827. ³⁸ They also published pamphlets, such as the series 'The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology' and 'The Library of the Fathers', the latter partly financed by Edward Pusey. ³⁹

Parker did not, however, initially publish the most important series of pamphlets known collectively as the *Tracts for the Times* (1833-41). Newman, the architect of and principal contributor to the tracts, published the first titles privately in 1833 as by 'Members of the University of Oxford' and initially used his personal networks to distribute the

³⁵ Baptism Certificate for Joseph Vernon and Anna Maria.

³⁶ 'John Henry Parker', *ODNB*.

³⁷ Simon Eliot, 'The Evolution of a Printer and Publisher', *The History of Oxford University Press, volume 2:* 1780-1896, ed. by Simon Eliot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.77-113, (p.82).

³⁸ Septimus Rivington, *The Publishing Family of Rivington* (London: Rivingtons, 1919), p.105 and p.113.

³⁹ Peter Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 9.

pamphlets before arranging with Rivingtons to reprint them in monthly batches. ⁴⁰ This secured a wider distribution for the tracts in London and Oxford, including by Parker. The tracts were published to provoke a lethargic Anglican Church into a theological debate about its dogma and strategy, and to energise a clergy who were accused of performing their work in 'a perfunctory manner'. ⁴¹ The tracts were used as a forum 'to conduct a debate in print' and quickly sparked responses from evangelical sects who countered with tracts of their own. ⁴²

The final tract, Number 90, was published in 1841 just before Whitaker arrived in Oxford but the electrifying effect of the series was still palpable and culminated with Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845. Whitaker was reported to be profoundly affected by the Tracts and the publishing strategies used to disseminate their message, particularly the use of personal networks; his son, Edgar, later related that his father 'had a belief in their power' and saw the series as a model for his own publishing efforts. According to an undated 'Memorandum for Friends' printed to serve as guidelines for distribution, supporters were urged 'to endeavour to engage *real* friends of the principles advocated in the Tracts in a similar service in their respective neighbourhoods'. Whitaker's admiration for the Tractarians and their publications persisted after he left Oxford. He commemorated the 50th anniversary of the publication of the tracts with a special article for

⁴⁰ 'Advertisement', Members of the University of Oxford, *Tracts for the Times* (London and Oxford: J. G. & F. Rivington and J. H. Parker, 1834), frontispiece. All the Tracts were published anonymously and the authors of many remained a mystery until Whitaker printed a list of them all in the 1883 edition of *Whitakers' Almanack*. ⁴¹ Esther Rhoads Houghton, "'The British Critic" and the Oxford Movement', *Studies in Bibliography*, 16 (1963), 119-37, (p.16).

⁴² Joan Allen, 'The Nineteenth Century Dominational Press', in *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volume Two: Expansion and Evolution 1800-1900*, ed. by David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.377-94, (p.383).

⁴³ See Kenneth McNab, 'Reconsidering the Oxford Movement after the 1845 Crisis', and James Pereiro, 'Did the Oxford Movement Die in 1851?', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, ed. by Stewart J. Brown, Peter Nockles, James Pereiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.571-84, (p.572), and pp.557-69, (p.558).

⁴⁴ TWA, note by Edgar Whitaker regarding the Tractarians, letters folder 1, p.6.

⁴⁵ Lawrence N. Crumb, 'Publishing the Oxford Movement: Francis Rivington's Letters to Newman, *Publishing History*, 28 (1990), 5-53, (p.6).

the 1883 edition of *Whitaker's Almanack* detailing their history and significance. ⁴⁶ Despite his lower social status, his knowledge of and commitment to theological publishing kept him on warm terms with Newman and other Tractarians, especially John Keble and Edward Pusey, and he corresponded with them well into the 1880s. ⁴⁷

Although he was now working in Oxford, his wife and family remained in London. The arrangement was made possible by the opening of a new railway line that reached Oxford in 1844 enabling Whitaker to travel between London and Oxford faster than by coach. It is not known where he lived in Oxford but by 1848 he was dispatched back to London to open a branch of Parker's business at 377 Strand. He was now responsible for the daily running of a retail bookshop on a busy shopping street as well as acting as distributor and wholesaler for the Learned Press' books in London. Back in the familiar territory of the Strand, he was also given the opportunity to edit some of the firm's publications such as the *Morning* and the *Evening Church Services*, and some titles that evoked the spirit of his Oxford friends, *Tracts for the Christian Seasons*, published in 1849, and *Tracts for Parochial Use* in 1852.

Whitaker was able to develop his own publishing ideas because his employer recognised his abilities and held him in high regard. Not only was he responsible for editing some of the publications and running the Strand establishment but he was also trusted to represent the firm in public discourse. For instance, in April 1849 Whitaker wrote a review article in *The Christian Remembrancer* as the 'honorary secretary' of a committee of 'Members of the Church of England' that assembled at 377 Strand to formulate a petition

⁴⁶ Whitaker's Almanack (hereafter WA) 1883, enlarged edition, pp.440-42.

⁴⁷ The Whitaker archive contains several letters from all three men dating from the late 1840s and again in the 1880s when an article for the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the first Tracts was published in *Whitaker's Almanack* 1883.

⁴⁸ Rob Banham, 'The Workforce', *The History of Oxford University Press, Volume Two: 1780-1896*, ed. by Simon Eliot (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.175-225, (p.194).

⁴⁹ 'John Henry Parker', *ODNB*. By 1848, J. H. Parker title pages and the advertising entries in *The Publishers' Circular* were listed as being published in Oxford and London, so the London move must have happened before then.

against a Bill going through Parliament.⁵⁰ In the review, Whitaker assessed the arguments proffered in eleven pamphlets by clerics and writers and suggested a form of words for readers to use in their own petitions to Parliament. More importantly, Parker also let Whitaker publish his own titles, allowing him to put some of his own publishing ideas to the test. He started with a parish magazine inspired by the Tracts.⁵¹

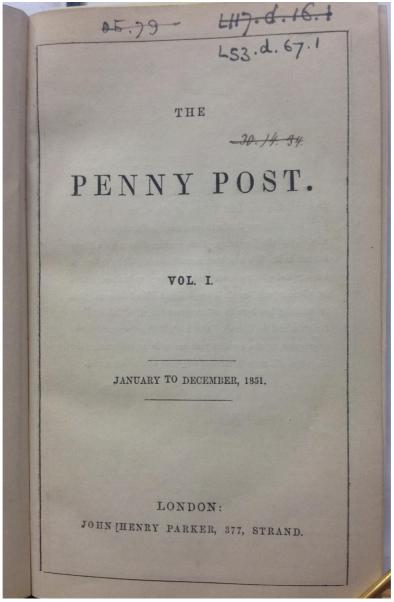


Fig.3 The Penny Post 1851

⁵⁰ The Christian Remembrancer, April 1849, p.474.

⁵¹ No documentation survives from the time of Whitaker's employment with Parker but a letter from Parker and Son dated 9 September 1946 in the TWA confirms that he was a former employee.

The Penny Post was published monthly from January 1851 for use by the Anglican clergy in their parochial work. 52 Whitaker outlined the rationale for the new publication in a prospectus. There was 'an existing and pressing need' for 'sound teaching and accurate information on Church matters adapted for the religiously-minded and moderately educated mass of the middle, and the more intelligent portion of the lower, classes of England'. 53 This group was a 'large and important' enough to need a publication specifically for them and distributed to each parish. 54 The Penny Post would direct them to 'pressing Church issues' and the principles on which they rested 'which alone can help them to a decided and consistent course of action'. 55 The magazine would not tell them what to think but provided them with the information they needed to think for themselves. This would become a recurring theme in Whitaker's publications.

Printed as a small octavo with between twenty-eight and thirty-two pages per issue, the magazine provided 'sound, useful, entertaining, yet, in it [sic] truest sense, *religious* [his emphasis] reading for the poorer and middle classes of our fellow Churchmen'; it was to be 'the poor man's household friend' and provide 'simple papers on Doctrine, and Discipline; and to vindicate the position of the English Church against the assumptions of Popery, and the virulence of Dissent'. ⁵⁶ Imitating the methods of the Tractarians, it was distributed by the clergymen themselves and used as an instrument for teaching. Each issue included a variety of articles and a typical issue would include the following:

An Article on the History of the Church and particularly the English branch of it.

A Doctrinal Article.

An Article on some current subject of discussion.

Church Intelligence, both Home and Foreign.

Extracts from approved Church Writers.

⁵² Prospectus for *The Penny Post*, p.2. For the purposes of this study only the issues from 1851-52, edited by Whitaker, were researched in order to understand his editorial role, the nature of the information service he intended to provide, and the levels of engagement from readers he hoped to achieve.

⁵³ Prospectus, p.1.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.1-2.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.2.

⁵⁶ Penny Post, Vol. 2, 1852, Preface to bound volume.

Biography, Poetry, and Anecdotes.

Short Notices of Books likely to be of use to the Middle Classes and the Poor.⁵⁷

The style of the articles was accessible, informal, sometimes even conversational, and offered simplified answers to complicated questions of Anglican doctrine, history and teaching.

There was also a list of recently published titles compiled from publishers' catalogues, trade lists, and advertisers. The recommended titles were mostly devotional in nature and included sermons, tracts, and Scriptural arguments governing marriage. Bound copies were made up at the end of each year for libraries and collectors with a two-page, two-column index.

The first year proved to be difficult and sales were slow. A large and sustained circulation was essential for the magazine's survival so notices were placed to explain that 'nothing less than a *very extensive circulation* [original emphasis] can secure the continuance of THE PENNY POST'. The journal faced stiff competition from cheap subsidised publications produced by religious societies like the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society. A direct plea to 'Friends' of the journal was issued:

'our circulation is still far from sufficient: and must be increased if we are to stand' [...] Will sound Churchmen alone stand aloof? When hostile books are circulated by thousands, shall we count only our tens? Let each good Churchman ask himself – What have I done to circulate the *Penny Post*? Let each resolve to do his utmost.⁵⁹

The appeal worked and circulation increased, much to the relief of the thankful editor:

The Editor feels that besides the debt of gratitude to the Author of all good, he owes special thanks to those who have so efficiently aided him in his responsible and laborious work, by their contributions and their counsels...in a Work such as ours, Publisher, Editor, Contributors, Correspondents, and Readers, must all labour together.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Prospectus, p.3.

⁵⁸ From a full-page advertorial in *Renewed Explanation in Consequence of Rev. W. Dodsworth's Comments on Dr Pusey's Letter to the Bishop of London* by E. B. Pusey (Oxford and London: John Henry Parker, 1851), p.13. ⁵⁹ *Penny Post.* Vol 2, 1852, Preface.

⁶⁰ Penny Post, Vol. 3, 1853, Preface, pp.v-vi.

Whitaker saw the work of the magazine as a collective effort, a collaboration between himself as editor, his readers, and the contributors. Their goodwill and direct involvement were essential elements. This method and approach would become a feature of many of the Whitaker titles. The strategy for the *Penny Post* worked thanks to the contributors and 'many kind friends' who helped to increase the circulation, eventually selling 60,000 copies each month and attracting contributions from prominent writers such as John Keble and 'other High Church men'. However, *The Penny Post* remained with Parker after Whitaker left before being transferred to the Stationers' Company in the 1860s. It was still in print at the time of his death in 1895.

Having successfully launched *The Penny Post* and after nearly a decade with Parker, Whitaker decided in 1852 that it was time to start his own bookselling and publishing business. He could not have known beforehand but this was a pivotal moment in the history of the Victorian book trade. Stephen Colclough described 1852 as a year of 'profound significance for British print culture'. Amongst other events that signalled the growing market for books, Mudie's library moved into larger premises to accommodate their burgeoning collections and British sales of a million and a half copies of the American novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, were rumoured. Simon Eliot suggested that national events such as the 1851 Great Exhibition and the death of Wellington in 1852 also generated significant sales for souvenir and commemorative titles. For Richard Altick, 1852 was the year that the growth in demand for reading material developed into a mass market for books. He calculated the 'accessible reading public' in 1852 to be 60% of a population of 27 million,

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⁶¹ BKS, January 1859, p. 651.

⁶² TWA, Obituary Book, Athenaeum, 18 May 1895.

 ⁶³ Stephen Colclough, 'Distribution', *CHBB6*, pp.238-80, (p.238). Mudie's Select Circulating Library was founded in London in 1842 and became a dominant force in the book trade, see Guinevere Griest, *Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel*, (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1970).
 ⁶⁴ Richard Altick, 'English Publishing and the Mass Audience in 1852', *Studies in Bibliography*, 6 (1954), 4-31,

⁶⁵ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.8.

⁶⁶ Altick, 'English Publishing', p.5.

and that 'the gross potential British reading public' rested somewhere between five and six million.⁶⁷

However, the most consequential event in 1852 for both Whitaker and the book trade was the decision by a committee led by Lord Campbell that sought to settle the argument that had festered within the book trade for years about who controlled the price of books, the publisher or the bookseller. The Booksellers' Association, formed by the leading London houses to regulate bookselling in London, had enforced, albeit not always successfully, a set of regulations that compelled booksellers to retail their new books at prices set by the publishers. Trade allowances of between 25% to 40% of the retail price were negotiated with wholesalers and booksellers. The regulations stipulated that in order to 'enjoy the privileges of the trade' and be eligible for trade prices, every bookseller within a 12-mile range of the General Post Office had to advertise their stock at the publishers' recommended price and sell them with no more than a 10% discount from the advertised price for cash customers and no more than 15% to book societies.⁶⁸ Booksellers who offered greater discounts were blacklisted as 'undersellers' and refused further stock from members of the association. Initially few booksellers resisted the regulations, but sympathy for the booksellers grew with the suspicion that the association acted only for the benefit of publishers and wholesalers, and not for ordinary retail booksellers. The Economist commiserated with the booksellers, commenting that '[publishers] have treated cheap booksellers much the same way as sovereigns have treated smugglers'. 69 Another commentator noted that the Booksellers' Association had

⁶⁷ Altick, 'English Publishing', p.6. David Vincent's *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) gives a full account of the development of literacy across Europe from 1750-1950.

⁶⁸ Barnes, pp.21-22. Barnes is still the fullest account of the circumstances that led to the abolition of the booksellers' regulations.

⁶⁹ *Economist*, 3 April 1852, pp.363-64.

'a character of a combination for the preservation of a monopoly rather than an association for the protection of trade'.⁷⁰

Lord Campbell's committee concluded that the regulations were 'harmful and vexatious', were inconsistent with the principles of free trade and should be abandoned. The decision ended the Association's control over book prices and initiated a period of free trade in books. Booksellers could now set the retail price of their stock to suit the demands of their own local market. A few weeks later the Association itself was dissolved with the result that there would be no longer any 'rules for further guidance of the trade'. Without the association there would be no mechanisms for regulation, no means of governance, no forum for debate or discussion of issues affecting the trade, and no accountability for any traders operating outside accepted traditions and customs. Although the news was reported without comment or further explanation, the ramifications of the decision would reverberate through the book trade for the next half century.

Bookselling in the 1850s

The numbers of new titles had steadily increased since the beginning of the century. Technological innovations such as steam-powered printing machines, mass-produced paper, and case bindings enabled the production of printed texts 'on an industrial scale'. Modestly priced books retailing at between 1s and 2/6 were produced in large quantities for series aimed at railway travellers, and for the growing market for educational texts, travel books, and science literature. The distribution of goods, especially heavy items like books, became

⁷⁰ Fraser's Magazine, June 1852, p.722.

⁷¹ Barnes, p.28.

⁷² The Publishers' Circular (hereafter PC), 16 June 1852, p.209.

⁷³ Colclough, 'Distribution', p.238.

⁷⁴ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.329.

cheaper and faster after the expansion of the railway network, and Rowland Hill's reforms of the post office from 1840 that standardised postage rates. Not only letters but also circulars, catalogues and other forms of direct mail advertising could be sent anywhere in the country for a uniform pre-paid rate of a penny. For heavier items, the 'book post' was introduced in 1848. This concession was initially intended to encourage the use of circulating libraries sending books weighing up to 1lb for 6d, but from 1855 it was extended to include any printed matter as long as no correspondence was included and the packet remained open for inspection. The maximum weight allowable was 14lbs charged at 7s, so several books could be included in each packet.

Despite these improvements, bookselling remained a precarious business and there were few protections for small enterprises. The state played a minimal role in regulating the economy and business environment, having adopted a policy of *laissez faire*, and the courts took a view of 'caveat emptor' that created the ideal conditions for fraud and dishonesty.⁷⁷ The banking system was highly localised, under-capitalised, and prone to collapses. The use of paper money became more secure after the 1844 Bank Act but ready cash was in short supply. Low levels of trust outside the family group meant that small businesses and individual traders seeking investment or loans had to rely on personal and family resources, leading to 'tangled webs of economic dependency' that put them all at risk by exposure to the market.⁷⁸ Most small businesses could expect 20-50% of their accounts receivable to be

⁷⁵ The penny rate was charged for mail weighing less than half an ounce.

⁷⁶ Printed Matter Rates on http://www.gbps.org.uk/information/rates/inland/printed-matter.php [accessed 30 July 2021]

⁷⁷ Ron Harris, 'Government and the Economy 1688-1850', *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume 1: 1700-1860*, ed. by Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.204-37, (p.204); James Taylor, 'Privacy, Publicity and Reputation: How the Press Regulated the Market in Nineteenth-Century England', *Business History Review*, 87 (2013), 679-701, (p.681).

⁷⁸ Pat Hudson, 'Industrial Organisation and Structure', *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Volume 1: 1700-1860*, ed. by Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28-56, (p.55).

unpaid at any one time.⁷⁹ Some of this risk could be mitigated by limiting business transactions to narrow social or professional circles and by building business networks with complex arrangements of credit and debt obligations, a system that Margot Finn described as creating 'hostages to traditions of consumer activity rooted in credit, character and connection'.⁸⁰

Within the book trade a range of financial instruments were used to settle bills and manage financial obligations. These included long- and short-term credit arrangements such as post-dated promissory notes, bills of exchange, accommodation bills, and trade bills. 81 They were, in essence, forms of loans that could be sold on to other traders by 'discounting' them before their expiry date. Perhaps the most notorious illustration of the fragility of these financial entanglements was the 1826 collapse of Scotland's pre-eminent publishing firm Archibald Constable & Sons, when the loans based on trade and accommodation bills became greater than sums owed to them and the firm collapsed, bringing down their printer and London agents with them. 82 Although too late to save Constable, legislation such as the Limited Liability Act of 1855, Joint Stock Companies Act of 1856, and the Companies Act of 1862 helped companies stabilise their finances by enabling them to seek capital whilst limiting their liabilities. Nonetheless, most book trade firms remained small family firms or unincorporated partnerships until the latter part of the century.

Whitaker's reasons for leaving Parker's employment are not known but the signs for his new business seemed auspicious; new books were in demand. Book production rose 63% from 1846 to 1851; *The Publishers' Circular* recorded 3231 new titles in 1846,

⁷⁹ David Kent, 'Small Businessmen and their Credit Transactions in Early Nineteenth Century Britain, *Business History*, 36, 2 (2004), 47-64, (p.53).

⁸⁰ Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture 1740-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.280.

⁸¹ Mary Poovey, *Genres of Credit: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.156. See also Ross Alloway, 'Cadell and the Crash', *Book History*, 11, 1 (2008), 125-47, (p.129).

⁸² Ross Alloway, 'The Sequestration of Archibald Constable and Company', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 103, 2 (2009), 221-43, (pp.222-23).

rising to 5265 in 1851.⁸³ However, it became clear only with hindsight that 1852 was also the year when growth started to slow; only 4899 new titles were recorded in 1852, a drop of 7% from the previous year.⁸⁴ Output did not recover to 1851 levels until the late 1870s.⁸⁵ Concern for the viability of booksellers increased; *The Bookseller* later reported that although the demand for books had grown 'a hundredfold' since the beginning of the century and publishers were producing more books than ever, booksellers were not benefitting and their numbers were in sharp decline.⁸⁶

Accurate estimates of the numbers of booksellers are hard to find as the official figures conflated categories and contemporary accounts are anecdotal, but throughout the period of this study there was concern that booksellers were under threat from a variety of sources and that their numbers were falling. In 1849, 1200 London booksellers were invited to a meeting of the Booksellers Committee in the attempt to enforce their regulations. The 1851 census was reported to have counted 8,433 traders who described themselves as booksellers and publishers. By 1855, *Hodson's Booksellers, Publishers and Stationers Directory* listed just over 1000 booksellers in London with another 5000 across the United Kingdom, although many were of these were also listed as publishers, binders, libraries, newsvendors and music sellers. The 1861 census combined 'publishers' and 'booksellers', and included 'librarians' in the category between 1871-91. By 1890 *The Bookseller*

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⁸³ Eliot, Some Patterns, Tables B17-18, p.122, and p.8.

⁸⁴ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, p.122.

⁸⁵ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, pp.112-13 and pp.122-23.

⁸⁶ BKS, October 1867, pp.767-78.

⁸⁷ Barnes, p.19.

⁸⁸ *BKS*, February 1864, p.91.

⁸⁹ Thomas Hodson, *Hodson's Booksellers, Publishers and Stationers Directory 1855, reprint,* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographic Society, 1972)

⁹⁰ Occupations of the people (England and Wales) enumerated in 1871, 1881, and 1891. Return showing the numbers of males and females (distinguishing those aged under and over 20 years) enumerated in England and Wales, at each of the three censuses in 1871, 1881, and 1891, under the various occupational headings in the census reports for those years; &c., House of Commons Parliamentary Papers 1895, https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1895-073073?accountid=14511 [accessed 31 July]

calculated that were only about 400 booksellers left in London, a reduction of 67% from 40 years earlier. ⁹¹ It was into this now deregulated book trade that Whitaker began his work as an independent publisher and bookseller, styled as 'J. Whitaker', in Pall Mall.

Independence in Pall Mall

After nearly a decade working for J. H. Parker, Whitaker struck out as an independent publisher and bookseller of mainly theological books at 41 Pall Mall. St James' was a fashionable part of London and well-located between the seat of government in Whitehall and the commercial streets of the West End. Whitaker's reasons for taking the building at number 41 are not recorded but his was not the only bookshop in the street: *Hodson's Directory* of 1855 lists four other bookshops. 92 One consideration may have been proximity to one of the gentleman's clubs, the Oxford and Cambridge University Club, which was located almost directly opposite number 41. The club building at 71-77 Pall Mall was a London base for current and former members of the two ancient English universities so he was in a perfect location to engage visiting clergymen in his bookshop and offer them his publishing services. 93

The publishing side of the business started modestly with two titles under the new 'J. Whitaker' imprint; *Whitaker's Clergyman's Diary 1852*, which he had started at Parkers, and a short pamphlet by Thomas Ramsay entitled *The Short-comings of our Public Education: a letter to the Right Hon. the Earl of Lonsdale*. These were followed by a mixture of modestly and low-priced books such as *The Church Hymnal*, available in two sizes, 24mo or 18mo, for

⁹¹ BKS. October 1890, p.1019.

⁹² *Hodson's Directory* 1855, pp.67-76.

⁹³ Survey of London, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1/pp419-424 [accessed 30 July 2021]. However, there is no evidence in the Club's membership books that suggests a connection to Whitaker nor any evidence in the Committee Minutes that he ever supplied books to the Club.

1s, and *The Church Music Book* for 1s.⁹⁴ There were also several general books, such as *Tangible Typography: or How the Blind Read* by Edmund C. Johnson, a 48-page book about reading systems for blind readers such as braille; and *Pitcairn's Island: A Lecture delivered at the Christchurch School-room, St Pancras* by Commander M. Burrows, a 66-page account of the island and the mutiny of 1789.⁹⁵ One or two were substantial publications, such as Richard Field's *Five Books of the Church* in four quarto volumes priced at 42s. The following year the list expanded to eighteen titles, again, a mixture of devotional and general books. Some of these books may have been published by commission but without the business archive it is difficult to be certain. In addition, three periodicals were launched, *The Churchman's Magazine, The Christian Student: An Educational Magazine*, and *Synodalia: A Journal of Convocation*.

Whitaker's intentions for *The Churchman's Magazine* were outlined in a letter to the Rev. John Armstrong of Tidenham, and can be read as a mission statement for his new business. The magazine was intended 'to disseminate religion by the medium of the Press' in an effort to counter the avalanche of publications produced for other Christian groups, particularly Dissenters and Roman Catholics. ⁹⁶ He was concerned at the apparent lack of interest in the teachings of the Church amongst the newly-educated middle-classes, and by their inertia in the face of the neediness of the poor. He lamented:

the Clergymen commonly remark, "We can get at the very poor, we can get at the very rich, but the shopkeeper and the farmer seem to be out of our reach". 97

Despite regular church attendance and charitable donations, this group showed little interest in doctrinal matters, the spiritual work of the Church, and they did not 'even consider that

⁹⁴ See Appendix 1. for the full list of Whitaker titles.

⁹⁵ Another more established publisher called Whittaker & Co in Ave Maria Lane also published religious and educational titles.

⁹⁶ TWA, Letter to Rev. Armstrong, p.5.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

those living around them in misery and vice have souls to be saved'. 98 Whitaker thought the Church of England would have more influence with this group if there were a 'judiciously conducted Magazine' based on sound Church principles and through which the work of the Church could be promoted. 99

The proposed magazine was larger and more ambitious than *The Penny Post*.¹⁰⁰ Extending to 64 pages, Whitaker planned for a wide circulation, including 250 copies to circulate in the colonies.¹⁰¹ It was designed for convenience. The intended readers were short of time so the information was organised to allow them to:

snatch their literary meals, like hasty coach dinners of old, in the intervals of business, and are therefore likely to find in good Periodicals the sort of food they want - something easily taken up and easily laid down.¹⁰²

The contents covered a similar range of subjects as those in *The Penny Post* and stipulated the duties expected of readers in matters of prayer and alms-giving, articles on doctrinal matters; obituaries; missionary news; and illustrations of prayer books. ¹⁰³ As notices of recently published books, both secular and religious, were also to be an important feature, leading publishers such as John Murray received copies of the prospectus to demonstrate Whitaker's plans and were solicited for review copies. Although the magazine lasted only four years it was another example of what became Whitaker's editorial style: publications that not only served a defined community of readers but also encouraged engagement and cohesion within their numbers.

Due to the loss of Whitaker's archives the financial basis for his business and the capacity in which he acted for the writers he published are hard to discern. According to his son George, several clerics used his publishing services to arrange for sermons to be

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ The Penny Post remained with Parker.

¹⁰¹ TWA, Letter to John Murray, 18 December 1852.

¹⁰² TWA, Armstrong, p.12.

¹⁰³ TWA, Ibid., p.8.

published. ¹⁰⁴ Whether he assumed responsibility of the copyrights or not, they were published and protected under the terms of the 1842 Copyright Amendment Act. The Act extended the term of protection throughout the author's life plus seven years, or forty-two years from first publication whichever were the longer. The original intention of the act was to clarify and consolidate the piecemeal provision of protection for literary works but several aspects of the original plan were dropped from the final bill, leading to confusion over the lawful use of new technologies such as photography and lithography and disagreement regarding the borders of 'fair use' and infringement of copyright. ¹⁰⁵ During Whitaker's time as editor of *The Bookseller*, several unsuccessful attempts were made to reform copyright law resulting in 'fragmented and confusing' provision that consisted of fifty-five separate domestic and international acts, treaties and conventions. ¹⁰⁶ By necessity, Whitaker became an expert in copyright law and, as illustrated later in this thesis, published articles and guidance on the proper use of copyright.

Financial calamity and Insolvency 1854-56

Having taken these first steps as an independent publisher, Whitaker moved his family of three children and a young servant out of their crowded lodgings in Covent Garden. They did not live 'over the shop' but instead rented a series of lodgings in various parts of London. Until 1851 they had lived near the Strand in a crowded house at 26 Henrietta Street which they shared with another family of eight,

¹⁰⁴ BKS, 24 January 1908, p.9. George Whitaker was now the editor of *The Bookseller*.

¹⁰⁵ Catherine Seville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England: The Framing of the 1842 Copyright Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.10.

¹⁰⁶ Catherine Seville, *The Internationalisation of Copyright Law: Books, Buccaneers and the Black Flag in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.36-37.

¹⁰⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, revised edition 2002), p.242. Businessmen and their families usually lived where they worked in rented accommodation.

but now moved across the river Thames to Camberwell to seek more space. The expansion of the transport networks in the 1840s and 1850s helped to create new residential suburbs away from the City and Westminster served by the railways, horse-drawn omnibuses, and horse-drawn trams. Camberwell was equally well-placed for access to the City and Westminster. By the 1850s, 200,000 people walked the mile and a half daily to work in shops and offices, and soon omnibus services became more frequent and cheaper on these routes. From dwellings at 280 Albany Road, a main thoroughfare running between the Old Kent Road and Walworth Road, Whitaker joined the lines of commuters heading north.

The family moved several times between 1851 and 1862 to houses in Camberwell, Peckham and Brixton. Although these southern suburbs offered more space, a move south of the river could also signal financial distress. South London may have been cheaper than north of the river but it was also the location of several debtors prisons including the Marshalsea, the Queen's Bench, and the Surrey gaol on Horsemonger Lane. While Whitaker was busy developing his bookshop business in Pall Mall, his family life suffered a calamitous misfortune after his wife died from a stroke after the birth of his fourth child, Marian, in October 1853. Whitaker was suddenly left to care for and support three children plus a newborn baby.

Ann's death was the beginning of a period of great difficulty for Whitaker. Although many of the books he published that year were short, several were more than 140 pages long

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Whitaker entry for the Census 1851, TNA, PRO/HO.107/1511/10.

¹⁰⁹ H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961), p.71.

¹¹⁰ Marian's birth certificate places the family at 280 Albany Rd.

¹¹¹ The family were in Camberwell in 1853 on the birth certificate of his daughter Marian, in Peckham in 1855 on his second marriage certificate, and Brixton in 1861 census.

¹¹² Jerry White, 'Metropolitan Geographies of Debt 1700-1900', *History Workshop Journal*, 83 (2017), 118-29, (p.124).

Ann's death certificate in 1853 states the family lived in Albany Road http://www.werelate.org/wiki/Person:Ann_Norris_%2813%29 [accessed 30 July 2021].

suggesting that he had committed considerable sums to printers and binders. By mid-way through 1854, and with only two titles published, he became insolvent. His debts outweighed sums owed to him and he was unable to pay his creditors. No records remain to explain exactly what caused the insolvency but his son George later offered clues to what may have been a contributing factor: too many of the clergymen for whom Whitaker provided sermon writing and publishing services failed to pay him on time, or even at all:

His business, which was largely connected with the clergy, did not prosper, and it is regrettable to state that his faith in the honesty of many clergymen of the Church of England was a chief cause of its non-success. A prominent part of the business was the writing of sermons, which were supplied to those who either through indolence or incapacity, required them.¹¹⁴

Whitaker's predicament was common. The book trade was a precarious business and even large and well-established publishers had found themselves in financial disarray to the extent that in an earlier century 'the cast of official bankrupts often reads [...] like a who's who of the lost eighteenth-century London book trades'. In the next century, John Stockdale repeatedly found himself in debtors' gaol thanks to poor publishing decisions, entering five different gaols from 1819 to 1840. The difference between insolvent and bankrupt debtors was a question of scale. An insolvent was usually a trader or producer for whom the delicate balance between debt and credit had temporarily failed while the bankrupt was usually a substantial merchant or manufacturer who owed large sums of money to creditors with no hope of ever being able to repay them or had attempted to evade them. As an insolvent, Whitaker's debt would have been modest but still devastating.

The years between 1854 and 1856 were difficult. Whitaker's name appeared repeatedly as an insolvent debtor in the pages of *The London Gazette*, the official journal of

¹¹⁴ BKS, 24 January 1908, p.9.

¹¹⁵ Raven, The Business of Books, p.296.

¹¹⁶ Raven, The Business of Books, p.327.

record, although it is not clear whether he suffered several lapses into insolvency or that a single event was played out over two years. On 14 July 1854, an indenture notice stated that he had 'conveyed and assigned all his estate and effects' to two assignees, Joseph Bennett, a wholesale stationer, and a bookbinder called Thomas Chubb. 117 The men were entitled to collect any sums owed to Whitaker until he had repaid what he owed them. They were given two months to execute the indenture. The notice did not record the precise sums owed but Whitaker later testified that £30 would clear his debts, approximately £2600 today. 118 That the sum owed was modest and that it was owed to men who were likely to be suppliers of services to his business indicate the fragility of a small publisher's business.

The insolvency process was not designed to protect swindlers and rogues from repayment of monies owed but was a means for an honest trader to honour commitments to their creditors. The maintenance of a reputation and good standing amongst peers was assured by the quick repayment of debts. ¹¹⁹ In an effort to keep his good name, Whitaker wrote to his debtors to instruct them to pay directly to his creditors the sums that were owed to him:

41 Pall Mall, London 30th August 1854

Sir,

Having unfortunately been obliged to make an assignment of my Estate, for the benefit of my Creditors, I shall be much obliged by your paying the amount of your Account to Mr Joseph Bennett, one of the Assignees, of 181 Upper Thames Street by Post Office order or otherwise.

Your obedient Servant, J Whitaker (signature)¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ London Gazette, 4 August 1854, issue 21579, p.2448.

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¹¹⁸ £30 is the sum Whitaker claimed to need in his RLF application.

¹¹⁹ Gustave Peebles, 'Washing Away the Sins of Debt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55, 3 (2013), 701-24, (p.710).

¹²⁰ TWA, Letter to creditors, 30 August 1854.

He also tried to raise funds from other assets to clear the debt. The copyright in *Whitaker's Clergyman's Diary* was transferred to the Stationers Company, and *The Educational Register and Family Almanack* returned to John Henry Parker. ¹²¹ To make matters worse, Whitaker's father, Thomas, died in October 1854, leaving everything he had to his second wife Susan and nothing to his children. ¹²² Whitaker could not depend on his family for assistance.

Undaunted, he soon started another business at 310 Strand. Having given up the Pall Mall premises, perhaps as part of the settlement of his insolvency, by January 1855 he was publishing a new periodical with Thomas Delf called *The Artist*. A departure from the primarily religious publications he had previously published, this indicated a broadening of his publishing interests. In addition, on 19 May 1855, less than two years after Ann's death, he re-married, this time in an Anglican church wedding at St Giles, Camberwell. Elizabeth Brown was the nineteen-year old daughter of a silversmith and now had four motherless children to care for. That her father was a silversmith like Whitaker's own, and that he and his new bride had both been living at the same address in Peckham at the time of their marriage suggests that they had met through a family connection, and that she had been engaged to look after the children after Ann's death. 125

Domestic life may have calmed but Whitaker was still in financial trouble. The sum he owed may have been small but, at over £20, it was enough to land him in debtor's gaol. 126 This time he turned to the Royal Literary Fund (RLF) for assistance. Founded in 1790 'to relieve authors in distress', the RLF had helped some very well-known writers including

¹²¹ P. J. Wallis, 'The Educational Register 1851-52', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 13, 1 (1964), 50-70, (p.50). *Family Almanack* was published by J. H. Parker after 1855.

¹²² Will of Thomas Whitaker, TNA, PROB/2199/358, proved 28 October 1854.

¹²³ Notice about Whitaker launching *The Artist* in *PC*, 1 January 1855, p.2.

¹²⁴ Marriage certificate 19 May 1855, London Church of England Parish Registers P73/GIS/025.

¹²⁵ Marriage certificate 19 May 1855.

¹²⁶ Jay Cohen, 'The History of Imprisonment for Debt and its Relation to the Development of Discharge in Bankruptcy', *Journal of Legal History*, 153 (1982), 153-71, p.164. Insolvents owing more than £20 were eligible for debtor's prison.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Love Peacock. ¹²⁷ In order to be eligible for RLF funds, the applicant had to provide evidence that he or she was a *bona fide* author of published works. In support of his claim Whitaker offered the four annual volumes each of two titles he had initiated at Parkers, *The Educational Register* and *The Clergyman's Diary* from 1851 to 1854. ¹²⁸ He confirmed that the reason for his application was 'failure in business in 1854' and he maintained that his income was 'very trifling', consisting of 'occasional contributions to a country newspaper [unnamed] on which I expect to obtain a permanent engagement in a few months'. ¹²⁹ The application was submitted at the end of July 1855:

280 Albany Road Camberwell

Gentlemen

I am sorry to be compelled to apply to your fund for assistance, but in consequence of various tradesmen and my landlord pressing me for money I am obliged to seek for aid from some quarter, otherwise I would hardly have claimed any merit, beyond great labour, for my productions. If however you will consider them a sufficient claim on your bounty I shall be truly grateful.

As I hope very shortly to obtain a permanent engagement [...] the pressure is only temporary and £30 will set me free.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your very obedient servant, J Whitaker

The application was supported by two surgeons, Richard Lawton and Joseph James, both of whom had known Whitaker for more than a decade. The men submitted letters of support along with third supporter, a Mr J. Anspell of Canterbury.

Just a week later, on 8 August 1855, the RLF turned down the application on the grounds that the authorship of the two titles were 'not sufficient to establish a claim on the

¹²⁷ RLF website, https://www.rlf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RLFShortHistory.pdf [accessed 23 February 2021].

¹²⁸ Whitaker's application to the RLF, London, RLF, Loan 96 RLF 1/1390.

¹²⁹ Whitaker, RLF.

¹³⁰ Richard Lawton may have been a family friend and related to the Herbert Lawton of Poole and Edgar Lawton mentioned in Whitaker's will.

fund' as the books were categorised as compilations rather than authored works, and even though they agreed that the works 'could not have been got up without much mental toil and author's craft'. Approximately 17% of applications to the RLF were rejected for a variety of reasons, and in this case, Whitaker was just not enough of an 'author' to qualify. He would have to go to the Surrey gaol. Built in 1798, it was the common gaol for Surrey and had a capacity for 400 inmates, many of whom were insolvent debtors like himself. 133

Although the Surrey gaol was not as squalid as the notorious Marshalsea, incarceration for Whitaker would not have been pleasant. Debtors remained in gaol until their debts were repaid, sometimes for many years. The more fortunate would be visited by family and friends who could bring food, wine, and other items for their comfort. Men lived and slept in the same large room, and there was no privacy: 'the unfortunate soldier, barrister, or merchant, is compelled to eat, herd, and sleep with the lowest vagabond of his sex'. 134

In January 1856, Whitaker was called to appear in the Court of Insolvent Debtors from the Surrey gaol. Now described as a 'newspaper reporter', he appeared at the Court in Lincoln's Inn, presenting himself 'on his own petition' in order to vest 'in the Provisional Assignee [his] Estate and Effects'. Like other insolvents, he had to place all his assets at the disposal of his creditors, apart from a few basic items for himself and his family, and commit to repaying the balance of all sums. A month later, he was called again to appear in court to be discharged unless any creditor appeared in court to oppose the decision.

¹³¹ Whitaker, RLF.

¹³² Nigel Cross, 'A Select Catalogue of Applicants to the Royal Literary Fund, 1790-1870', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 1980), p.56.

¹³³ British History Online https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol25/pp9-21#h2-0008 [accessed 30 July 2021].

¹³⁴ William Hepworth Dixon, *The London Prisons, With an Account of the More Distinguished Persons Who Have Been Confined in Them* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1850), pp.278-80.
¹³⁵ London Gazette, January 1856, p.358.

¹³⁶ David Kent, 'Small Businessmen and their Credit Transactions in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Business History*, 36, 2 (1994), 47-64, (p.48).

¹³⁷ London Gazette, February 1856, pp.403-04.

Whitaker's did not appear in the *London Gazette* again after this entry so his financial woes appeared to have been finally resolved almost two years after they began.

The Gentleman's Magazine and rehabilitation

In June 1856, J. H. Parker acquired the venerable periodical *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* and, with continued high regard for his erstwhile assistant, quickly installed Whitaker as one of the editors, giving him the opportunity to replenish his depleted funds, meet his financial obligations, and regain his honour. Founded in 1731 by Edward Cave, the magazine was a miscellany of the best writing sourced from a wide variety of other publications on serious historical and antiquarian topics, and included an extensive range of book reviews. It also carried grain prices and meteorological tables, and informal communication among its learned readers was encouraged by publishing an extensive correspondence column that ran over many pages. Continuing a tradition instigated by Cave, the identity of editor was masked by the pseudonym 'Sylvanus Urban', created to try to capture a broad readership from both town and country.

One of the highlights of the magazine was the correspondence column with letters addressed to Urban. This section of the magazine was an important part of its appeal and known to be 'as voluminous and diverse as *Notes and Queries* for scholarship or *The Sunday Times* for width of interest'. To prepare answers to the questions put to the column, Whitaker compiled notebooks to collect the wide range of statistical information, newspaper

three editors along with J. H. Parker and one other.

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¹³⁸ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.114. Whitaker was back at Parkers by July 1856 as Gladstone wrote to him there according to his diary entry of 22 July 1856, Gladstone Diaries, online edition. Many of the obituaries and summaries of Whitaker's life mention his role as editor of the magazine but none establish definitively whether he was 'an' editor or 'the' editor. Henry Curwen in *A History of Booksellers*, p. 317, states that he was one of

¹³⁹ James Secord, 'Science, Technology and Mathematics', CHBB6, 443-74, (p.452).

¹⁴⁰ Emily de Montluzin, 'Attributions of Authorship in the Gentleman's Magazine 1731-1868', no page number, Introduction, http://bsuva.org/bsuva/gm2/GMintro.html [accessed 30 July 2021]

¹⁴¹ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.114.

cuttings, and extracts from the government-issued 'Blue Books' needed so he would not be 'caught napping' by an unexpected question from one of his readers. These notebooks later became central to his plan in the late 1860s to publish a new almanack.

The Gentleman's Magazine's extensive book reviews made it an important source of information about new books and was used by the book trade and book-buyers. 143 However, Whitaker later revealed that his attempts to gather the details each month for the book list were frustrated by the limitations of the usual sources of information about new books and he was 'unable to procure the information'. 144 As a former bookseller himself, he understood the importance of staying abreast of the announcements of new books. The bibliographic and sales information they needed was found in a variety of sources such as publishers' catalogues, wholesalers' lists, and trade and auction sales catalogues. Reviews in the literary press and in national newspapers like *The Times* provided news and literary gossip but small and provincial booksellers would have found it difficult to access all these multiple publications. The trade advertisers, Bent's Literary Monthly Advertiser (1802) and The Publishers' Circular (1837), carried notices and advertisements primarily from the larger London publishers. Only a few entries came from Edinburgh or other publishing centres. In frustration, Whitaker was compelled to contact publishers himself to collect the information he needed, thereby broadening his own trade networks and developing relationships with a wide range of publishers all over the country. This expanded collection of trade contacts was key to the success of his next venture, a new trade journal, as he was now in direct contact with a large group of the very people who were most likely to become his contributors, advertisers, and subscribers.

¹⁴² Cuthbert Whitaker, ASLIB, p.114.

¹⁴³ Feather, A History of British Publishing, p.99.

¹⁴⁴ *BKS*, April 1866, p.295. He claimed that this information was now provided by *The Bookseller*. The assertion was repeated in the January 1908 anniversary issue on p.9.

Advertising and marketing books

Books were amongst the first products to be marketed through advertising. According to the Bodleian Library, its copy of the poster for William Caxton's *Pye's of Salisbury*, published around 1476, is the earliest surviving printed advertisement.¹⁴⁵

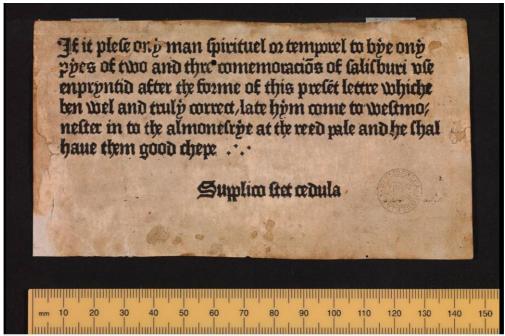


Fig.4 Poster for William Caxton's Pye's of Salisbury 146

The poster briefly describes the content of the work and indicates where it might be acquired -- at 'Red Pale' in Almonry, Westminster, where Caxton's shop was located. The Latin phrase that the poster should not be removed – 'supplico stet cedula' -- is evidence that it was to be used for promotional purposes. No details of the price or size are indicated. Five hundred years later, advertising was still used for marketing and promoting printed books; it was still the primary method of bringing notice of new works to the attention of the book trade and potential book-buyers. 147

Publishers' advertisements conveyed the bibliographic information, the name of the author, title, format and size, binding, and price of the book. All of these details contributed

¹⁴⁵ Bodleian Library, https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/8f9942c0-8d77-4e7c-adf1-fd69fcf0f92f/ [accessed 30 July 2021].

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ McKitterick, 'Introduction', CHBB6, p.60.

to the marketing effort and helped both booksellers and customers to identify and request the correct edition. The price was set by the publisher and was the basis for negotiating both the trade allowance and discounts for customers. The title and author conveyed the subject and credentials for the work while the format and binding signalled the likely market. The larger the size of the book and the more luxurious the binding the higher the price was likely to be and the more likely it was to appeal to the top end of the market. Folios and quartos were usually priced higher than octavos and duodecimos. The size of the book was suggested by its format, but the exact measurements of those formats changed over time. Publisher and bibliographer Michael Sadleir (1888-1957) noted how Victorian and Edwardian publishers continued to use the same names for different sizes, commenting that 'the "8vo" book of the fifties [1850s] is the "Demy 8vo" of the nineteen-twenties'. 148 Nonetheless, within the book trade of the time the meanings of these descriptions were understood.

Advertisements had additional important purposes, providing evidence for the publication date of an edition, thereby establishing the start of the period of copyright protection and enabling the publisher to assert their ownership of the copyright in the title. However, although advertising was important, it was not cheap. Publisher John Chapman suggested that publishers relied on advertising so much that the tax contribution from publishers' book advertisements in the 1830s had contributed a third of the overall tax collected nationally. The abolition of the 1/6 tax on advertisements in 1853 reduced the cost of advertising but nonetheless it remained a considerable expense for publishers, especially for the titles that needed to be advertised in several publications and over several years such as for schoolbooks, textbooks and manuals. Richard Bentley and Messrs. Colburn and Co were rumoured

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¹⁴⁸ Michael Sadleir, Excursions in Victorian Bibliography (London: Chaundry and Cox, 1922), p.11.

¹⁴⁹ John Chapman, *Cheap Books and How to Get Them*, reprinted from *The Westminster Review* April 1852, (London: John Chapman), p.6.

to spend £5000 annually on advertising, with Longmans spending even more.¹⁵⁰ Chapman calculated that a publisher should expect to spend at least 25% of the production costs of a new book on advertising.¹⁵¹ He underlined the trade's reliance on the practice:

the system of publishing in England involves a larger expenditure for advertising than is incurred in any other country; because here publishers depend more exclusively than elsewhere upon advertisements for making their works known to the public [...] almost the only way in which readers become aware of the existence of new English books is by means of advertisements ¹⁵²

Other countries like Germany had developed a centralised system organised by its trade association, the Borsenverein den Deutsche Buchhandels, to circulate information about new books via a network of agents and its journal, the *Borsenblatt fur den Deutschen Buchhandel*. This was a regular publication with printed lists and summaries of new books, along with some business news. Using this information, booksellers could sample new books 'á condition' and return them for a full refund if necessary. Similar practices applied in France and America. As booksellers were regularly notified about new and forthcoming books and could sample the texts for themselves, the need for extensive advertising was reduced.

There was no similar system in England but from 1802 William Bent produced a monthly publication, *A List of New Publications*, to provide booksellers with a trade list of new books.

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¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.10.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.6-7.

¹⁵³ This translates literally as the exchange association for the German book trade.

¹⁵⁴ Chapman, p.6. There are further details about the Borsenverein later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

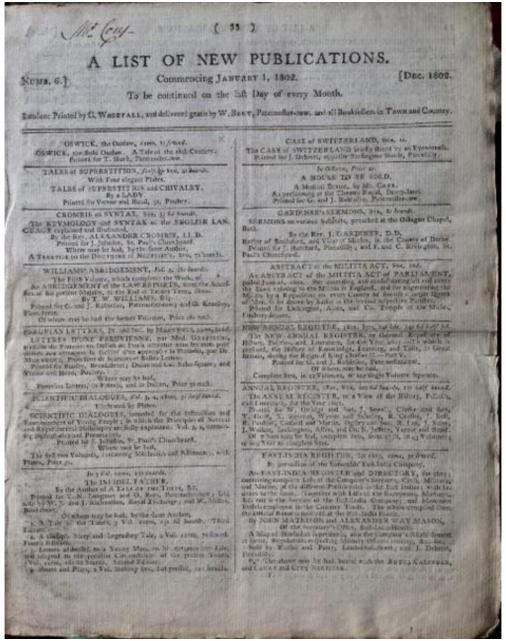


Fig.5 William Bent's A List of New Publications January 1802

Bent had already published other specialist titles, trade lists, and catalogues including Bent's Meteorological Journal (1793), The London Catalogue of Books (1773), and A General Catalogue of Books (1779). A List of New Publications was a quarto sheet measuring eleven inches by nine with untrimmed edges consisting of between four and six double-column pages of publishers' advertisements and a register of new engravings. To attract subscribers and advertisers the journal was sent free to 'all Booksellers in Town and Country' for the first two years. Copies were also made

available 'at most of the Coffeehouses in London and Westminster', locations frequented by businessmen and general traders. By January 1804, a 1d charge per issue was levied, rising to 6d in May 1805 when the title changed to *The Monthly Literary Advertiser*. In 1829, the title was changed again to *Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser* (hereafter collectively referred to as *Bent's* unless otherwise specified).

Until the late 1830s, most of the advertisements in *Bent's* were for single titles only. Even when a publisher submitted more than one title the entries were usually printed separately, often on different pages, suggesting that there was little incentive or benefit for the publisher to present the books together as a coherent list. The advertisements were grouped under four categories: 'Newly Published'; 'New Editions'; 'Works in the Press'; and 'Works Lately Published'. The first two categories contained advertisements of new books and included details of the style, format, and retail price of each title, plus the name and address of the publisher from whom the title could be ordered. Some books were offered in a variety of bindings and finishes. Where the books were listed as stitched, sewn, or in boards, the bookseller would seek the cheapest acceptable materials for this 'retail binding'. The advertised price reflected this standard binding so any customer who wanted better quality or bespoke binding would arrange it with the bookseller or directly with a binder. Other books were offered half-bound or fully bound, and some came in a variety of formats or with a choice of paper.

The latter two sections included details of forthcoming works, books that were advanced in the publishing process and were already 'in the press'. On occasion, authors, rather than publishers, also announced titles; in June 1805, Mrs Ann

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¹⁵⁶ A List of New Publications (LNP), June 1803, p.21. For clarity, footnotes will refer to the title as printed on the issue in question.

¹⁵⁷ Graham Pollard, 'Changes in the Style of Bookbinding 1550-1830', *The Library*, fifth series, 11, 2 (1956), 71-94, (p.76).

Plumtree announced a volume based on her experience living in the south of France during the French Revolution. ¹⁵⁸ In another entry, 'a Lady well known in the literary world' would soon publish 'A Description of Latium' illustrated with engravings, and the Reverend Tooke alerted the trade that he had finished his translation of Zollikofer's *Sermons on Education, and various other topics*'. ¹⁵⁹ The advertisements indicate that the authors of these works funded the publication of the books themselves. There were also entries for other printed items such as the latest printed engravings, maps and playing cards. The back pages functioned as an occasional marketplace for services and included a small number of announcements of dates of trade sales where publishers sold the bulk of their editions, notices of shares in copyrights for sale, and of bookselling businesses for sale. Details of situations vacant and jobs wanted were also posted.

As an additional service and an *aide memoire* for booksellers, Bent reprinted at the end of the year an index of all the publications advertised over the previous twelve months, arranged alphabetically by title and including details of the format, price and publisher. After 1814, the alphabetical lists appeared monthly and were then collated at the end of each year to be published separately as the *Annual List*. Later, as a further incentive to advertise, a notice was printed on the front page of each issue to remind publishers that placing an advertisement in the paper guaranteed inclusion in the next edition of Bent's trade catalogue, *The London Catalogue*. The catalogue was circulated not only around London but also the national and international trades, ensuring the widest circulation for those titles included in the volume.

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¹⁵⁸ The Monthly Literary Advertiser (MLA), June 1805, p.16.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., June 1805, p.16.

¹⁶⁰ *LNP*, December 1802, pp.38-40.

¹⁶¹ For example, see *Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser (Bent's)*, 10 Jan 1835, p.1.

An examination of the advertisements in *Bent's* corroborates much of what is commonly understood about the early nineteenth-century book trade. For instance, the vast majority of the advertisements came from London-based publishers, confirming the dominance of Paternoster Row and environs, with only a small number from elsewhere. Entries from the early decades also reveal the strategies used by publishers with limited funds and attempting to mitigate their financial exposure by sharing copyrights and partnering with fellow publishers to co-publish an edition. For instance, Vernor and Hood collaborated with several different partners: *Goldsmith's Natural History* by Mrs Pilkington was published with J. Harris, Lackington, Allen and Co, Darnton and Harvey, and H. D. Symonds; with T. Appleby of North Shields they co-published *The Vale of Conway*, a novel by 'A lady'; and *The Peasant's Fate: A Rural Poem with Miscellaneous Pieces* by William Holloway was published with Longman and Rees. 163 Vernor and Hood were also one of nineteen publishers who cooperated in the publication of *Walker's Atlas*, an octavo volume of twenty-four 'very neatly coloured' maps advertised at 8s. 164

The advertisements also included some books published by subscription. For these books, the edition was announced and funds collected before it went to the printer. Fourteen shillings, to be paid half on subscription and half on delivery of the book, was required from subscribers to contribute to an octavo volume of *The Art of Assisting the Memory* by J. Lettice, Vicar of Peasmarsh. To protect the publishers' investment and ensure a satisfactory sale, the advertisement included some additional marketing information emphasizing the material quality of the volume. By stating that

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¹⁶² Lee Erikson, 'The Romantic Era Book Trade', *A Concise Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. by John Klancher, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), pp.212-231, (p.215).

¹⁶³ *LNP*, December 1802, pp.34-35 and p.37.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ MLA, June 1805, p.15.

it was to be printed on 'a fine paper' and printed using an 'elegant type', booksellers would be able to assure their customers that the book was worth the price of the subscription.¹⁶⁶

A little editorial information was printed on the back page in some issues under the heading 'Literary Intelligence'. Most of the items were brief notices of forthcoming titles but these snippets of literary news could also be surprisingly international, indicating the global reach of the publication. Although book production was concentrated in London, the market for books was both national and international, and the London publishers needed to communicate with foreign booksellers and understand their overseas markets. For instance, in the December 1805 issue Bent printed, amongst other foreign stories, an account of the setting up of an association in Natchez, Mississippi, for the dissemination of knowledge; a brief piece about how science was being taught in Turkey; and an item about how the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin had admitted into its membership a Mr Wagener who had devised a way to print geographical charts from moveable type that was superior to engravings. 167 This information was not meant to be esoteric. It broadened and enriched the booksellers' knowledge of the world of books and developed their literary knowledge, enhancing their status as high-class tradesmen enabling them to impress and reassure their learned customers.

The main advantage of a specialist publication for advertisers was the regular and direct relationship it had with customers, primarily booksellers and libraries. By the 1830s, the number of advertisements carried in *Bent's* was growing rapidly,

166 Ibid

¹⁶⁷ MLA, December 1805, p.62.

suggesting that a dedicated trade publication was an effective marketing tool for publishers, and that the costs of advertising were offset by the benefits.

Year	Number of advertisements	Duty Paid	Average value of duty paid for each advertisement			
1831	590	£103 5s	3s 6d			
1832	792	£138 12s	3s 6d			
1833	883	£109 2s 6d	2s 5d			
1834	1,038	£77 17s	1s 6d			
Total	3303	£428 16s 6d	N/A			

Table 2 *Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser* Return of advertisement duty paid from 1831 to 1834¹⁶⁸

The lowering of the duty on advertising from 3/6 to 1/6 in 1834 boosted advertising further. Table 2 shows the number of advertisements printed in *Bent's* between 1831 and 1834 from 590 to 1,038, an increase of 75% over the four years.

The ownership of the paper changed several times after William Bent died in Aug 1823.¹⁶⁹ From October 1823, Hurst, Robinson & Co published the paper 'for the executor of the late William Bent', probably Bent's son, Robert.¹⁷⁰ By January 1826, Simpkin and Marshall had joined Hurst as co-publishers until they took over sole ownership in May of the same year after Hurst suffered losses in the infamous bankruptcy that also brought down Archibald Constable and Sir Walter Scott. The title changed to *Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser* in February 1829.¹⁷¹ Robert Bent

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¹⁶⁸ HCPP, Return of the number of advertisements in London newspapers 1831-34, Paper number 108, Volume 37, page 705.

https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1835-015697?accountid=14511 [accessed 30 July 2021]

¹⁶⁹ From the August 1823 issue the journal was published 'for the executor of William Bent', see p. 64.

¹⁷⁰ MLA, October 1823, p.73.

¹⁷¹ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.161.

became publisher from 1829 but in 1836 he took on a partner, David Kidd, before the paper was sold to Thomas Hodgson in 1839.¹⁷² Hodgson retained it until June 1858, when it was sold to Edward Tucker. The significance of these changes in ownership suggests that despite the growth in book production and the usefulness of the paper to the book trade, there was a committed but limited readership for a trade advertiser and that the economics for such a publication were difficult. *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* confirms that from 1802 until 1837 the only regularly published book trade publication was *Bent's*.¹⁷³

Bent's had benefitted from the growth of book production and the additional advertising that resulted over the first decades of the century but by the 1830s a new challenge emerged: dissatisfaction from its advertisers. From May to December 1836, a notice appeared on the masthead that Bent's was now published 'under the sanction of a committee of publishers'. This suggests that Bent's sought and gained the blessing of the leading publishing houses who wanted to exert some control over the only advertiser dedicated to their trade. Attempts were soon made to force changes. William Longman was reported to have proposed improvements but was 'ignored' so Longman, along with a group of fellow publishers, decided to set up their own publication in direct competition. 174

In 1836, a committee of fourteen of the 'principal Publishers of London', led by Longman and including established firms such as John Murray, John Rivington, and Robert Seeley, agreed to launch a new trade publication, *The Publishers'*Circular. The committee was 'anxious to establish some authorised medium for the

HCPP, Returns of Titles, Names and Addresses of Publishers, Weight and Date of Registration of every Registered Newspaper, whereof a Portion is stated on the Newspaper itself to be published without stamps, May 1854, p.327. The Bookseller, June 1858, p.242. Tucker merged the paper with The Bookseller in 1860.
 The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature 1800-1900, 3rd edition, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.85-86.

¹⁷⁴ BKS, September 1877, p.783. From the obituary for William Longman.

publication of their Advertisements' where 'the *first* announcement of every new Literary undertaking' would be found. The form and arrangement of the new publication was devised by Longman and it was initially to be published by his firm until the committee agreed that the appearance of impartiality was important and appointed Sampson Low as editor. An additional incentive for a new publication may have been a recent change in taxation. In 1836, the newspaper stamp was reduced from 4d to 1d, paper duty dropped from 3d to 1½d per pound, and the tax on advertisements was lowered to from 3/6 to 1/6.

The publishers' committee emphasized that the new journal was not the 'speculation of an individual' as was the case with *Bent's*, but was instead a collective initiative and backed by some of the most powerful publishers in London.¹⁷⁷

Although it was not marketed as an official publication, the committee acted as a *de facto* authority or representative body, for instance by proposing that their new publication collect information for a central repository of bibliographic details and a record of sale prices. Publishers were encouraged to submit 'one Advertisement of every New Work and New Edition which they publish' to be collected in a similar manner as in the German trade, a reference to the Borsenverein.¹⁷⁸

The Borsenverein was formed in 1825 to circulate information about new books and to regulate the production, distribution, and sale of books across the German states. In addition, the association lobbied for legislative changes to benefit the bookselling trade, acted as a clearing house for settling accounts, and later added other services for members such as the provision of training and professional

¹⁷⁵ PC, September 1837 to December 1838, Address, p.iii.

¹⁷⁶ BKS, May 1886, p.418. From the obituary for Sampson Low.

¹⁷⁷ *PC*, Address, 1837-38, p.iii.

¹⁷⁸ *PC*, Address, 1837-38, p.iii.

counsel.¹⁷⁹ Every publisher sent details of every title published to be included in the *Annual Catalogue* and, from 1834, the *Borsenblatt* was published several times a week to circulate news, reviews, and details of new books. The committee of *The Publishers' Circular* perhaps hoped that they could play a similar role for the British book trade. However, there was too much friction and too little alignment of mutual interests between the older established publishers and many of the newer retail booksellers for this to be achievable, and until the 1870s *The Publishers' Circular* remained primarily a publishers' advertiser with limited news, commentary, or analysis on trade matters.

The first issue of *The Publishers' Circular* appeared in October 1837 with fourteen pages of advertisements for books, periodicals, and engravings and a two-page classified index to the advertised books. Like *Bent's*, free copies were distributed to build circulation and support, with three thousand copies sent free for the first three years. Another 750 copies were sold at 2d per issue or 4s for an annual subscription. Publishers who placed advertisements received a free copy. The committee claimed that the advertisement charges were low, 'far below that of any other Periodical of equal circulation'. Exactly which periodicals they were referring to was not made clear but, at £4 per page, £2 per column or 8d a line, the charges were high compared to other literary journals. But these rates were cheaper than *Bent's* and were soon reduced further to three guineas per page or sixpence a line. 182

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¹⁷⁹ Klaus Saur, 'The Best Book Trade Organisation in the World?', Logos, 4, 3 (1993), 120-23.

¹⁸⁰ Simon Eliot and John Sutherland, *The Publishers' Circular 1837-1900, Guide to the Microfiche Edition* (Cambridge, Chadwyck-Healey, 1988), p.5.

¹⁸¹ Eliot and Sutherland, p.5.

¹⁸² Rates were lowered for *The Publishers' Circular* on 15 December 1842, see p.352.

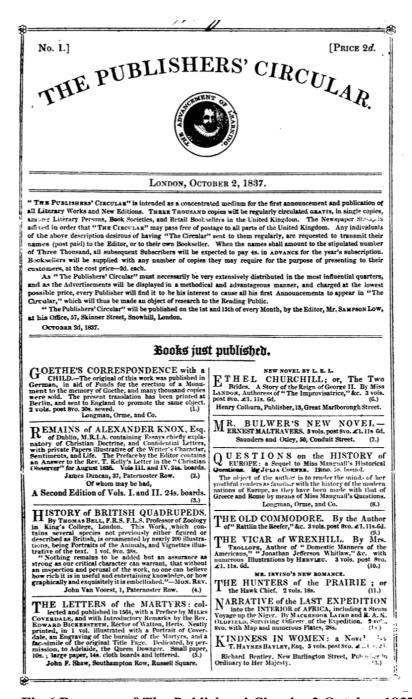


Fig.6 Page one of *The Publishers' Circular* 2 October 1837

There was strong initial support for the new circular, partly because of the free distribution. However, the arrival of a rival trade paper did not immediately damage *Bent's* sales, which increased for the first decade, suggesting that the growing market for books could support rival trade publications, as illustrated in Table 3.

Year	Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser (average number of stamps per issue)	The Publishers' Circular (average number of stamps per issue)
1837	14,000 (1166)	27,000 (1125)
1838	13,950 (1162)	85,750 (3572)
1839	16,250 (1354)	105,674 (4403)
1840	18,250 (1520)	66,300 (2762)
1841	18,500 (1541)	60,900 (2537)
1842	18,000 (1500)	57,550 (2397)
1843	18,000 (1500)	20,250 (843)
1844	16,500 (1375)	25,500 (1062)
1845	14,750 (1229)	19,000 (791)
1846	12,250 (1020)	54,500 (2270)
1847	13,000 (1083)	65,550 (2731)
1848	13,500 (1125)	64,532 (2688)
1849	11,087 (923)	58,900 (2454)
1850	13,500 (1125)	60,900 (2537)
	Average annual stamps issued: 15,110 Average monthly stamps issued: 1259	Average annual stamps issued: 55,165 Average monthly stamps issued: 2299

Table 3 Newspaper stamps issued annually between 1837 and 1850¹⁸³

It is not surprising that sales of these specialist trade publications were modest compared to publications aimed at a general readership. For comparison, *The Times* returned 3,335,000 stamps in 1837 and up to 11,900,000 stamps in 1850; the weekly *Athenaeum* returned 34,750 and 144,158 in 1850, a rise from 668 stamps per issue to

¹⁸³ HCPP Return of the Number of Newspaper Stamps issued at One Penny to newspapers in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales from 1837 to 1850, Paper number 42, Volume 28, Page 497, pp.2-3.

2,772 per issue. Over the same period, *The Morning Chronicle* returned 1,559,500 in 1837 and 2,079,000 in 1850. These publications also carried extensive advertisements for new books alongside reviews and articles on literary subjects and appealed to a largely middle-class literate readership, the same market for many publishers' books. Nonetheless, publishers primarily placed advertisements in *Bent's* and *The Publishers' Circular* in order to be in direct contact with their retail and institutional customers.

The fortnightly issues were twice as frequent as *Bent's* and included many of the same features, such as book lists, but with more pages of advertising. Taking a clear aim at *Bent's*, the committee claimed that only books that were not advertised anywhere at all, in other words books likely to have limited sales, were omitted. An index of titles published in the previous month was printed on the final pages of each issue. Another improvement on *Bent's* was an extensive and detailed index of new books reprinted at the end of each year that was classified by subject, as seen in Fig. 7, below. The index included classifications not only for the main categories but also for the smaller ones such as 'Medicine, Surgery &c' and 'Musical', and it extended to nearly seventy pages.

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¹⁸⁴ *PC*. Address, 1837-38, p.iii.

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Fig.7 Classified index to The Publishers' Circular 1837-39

After the first year, large claims for the journal were made that *The Publishers'*Circular was 'the first and only catalogue of the works published in Great Britain approaching completeness'. By the late 1850s, however, this claim of completeness was hard to justify and, as Whitaker was to discover himself when editing *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Publishers' Circular* did not reflect the expansion and diversity of the book trade as many of the regional and smaller London publishers did not advertise with them. Nonetheless, until the improved enumeration of new titles by the British Museum Copyright Receipt Books in the 1850s, these lists were the most comprehensive yet available. 186

¹⁸⁵ *PC*, Address, 1837-38, p.iii.

¹⁸⁶ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.10-11.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the journal grew larger. The editorial sections expanded to two or three pages of news and 'literary intelligence', mainly notices or announcements of forthcoming notable books. The back pages offered a selection of small advertisements for businesses for sale, situations vacant, and books wanted, giving readers the opportunity to exchange information, hire staff, and offer other services related to their trade. Special issues for educational books appeared after 1840, and supplements for Christmas books were produced from 1851. These supplements were so popular that orders for the 5000 copies of the 1858 Christmas supplement had to be placed by October. A fortnight later the whole printing was spoken for.

Other than the literary intelligence the journal contained only little news or commentary about trade matters; even topics of great significance receiving only minimal coverage. In what would have been considered an important development at the time, the abandonment of the Booksellers Regulations and the dissolution of the Association itself merited only a brief paragraph in June 1852. 190 As Secretary of the Booksellers' Association, Sampson Low would have been fully aware of the issue, having had a key role in the enforcement of the now abandoned regulations. He had been responsible for issuing the tickets that granted the privileges of the trade to compliant booksellers and would have fully understood the implications of the decision of Lord Campbell and his committee. Nonetheless, publishers' views on the matter were aired in a series of letters in *The Times* and in John Chapman's

¹⁸⁷ Eliot and Sutherland, p.6.

¹⁸⁸ *PC*, 1 October 1858, p.417.

¹⁸⁹ *PC*, 15 October 1858, p.441.

¹⁹⁰ PC, 1 June 1852, p.193. A second note appeared in the next issue stating that the committee had decided.

Westminster Review, but not in the book trade's own journal. 191 The Publishers' Circular was a medium for circulating publishers' advertisements and news of forthcoming titles, it was not a forum for debate.

One of the reasons for the greater emphasis on advertising rather than journalism in *The Publishers' Circular* was its economic model. As editor, Sampson Low was not paid directly by the committee but instead accepted a 'fair remuneration' for his work by retaining the income from the advertisements. ¹⁹² This created a financial incentive to fill the paper with advertising rather than incurring the expense of commissioning and writing news stories, reviews of new books, and analysis of trade matters. Low was an insider, a publisher with a general list, and the Secretary of the Committee that enforced the Booksellers' Regulations. He also had philanthropic interests and was one of the organisers behind the Booksellers' Provident Institute when it was formed in 1837. ¹⁹³ He worked to maintain order within the trade in part by circulating retail prices and bibliographic details in *The Publishers' Circular* to ensure all booksellers knew the prices and publication dates for the books they sold. ¹⁹⁴ Given his position as a publisher, he had no incentive to do anything that would disrupt the dominance of the leading London houses.

Book production rose in the early 1850s and competition between booksellers intensified. Sales of the two trade publications remained steady with *Bent's* and *Publishers' Circular* each selling approximately a thousand copies per issue. However, Thomas Hodgson, publisher of *Bent's* and *The London Catalogue* since 1839, ran into difficulties and

¹⁹¹ *The Times*, 30 March 1852, p.5; 31 March, p.8; 1 April, p.8; 2 April, p.5; 3 April, p.8; *Westminster Review*, April 1852, 511-554. See also Robert Bowes account in *Booksellers' Associations Past and Present* (Privately published for the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland, 1905).

¹⁹² Eliot and Sutherland, p.5.

¹⁹³ Marston, After Work, pp.41-42.

¹⁹⁴ Eliot and Sutherland, p.6.

¹⁹⁵ BKS, September 1858, p.393.

in June 1858 he sold both publications to Edward Tucker before declaring bankruptcy two months later. ¹⁹⁶ Despite this unpromising development and having weathered his own period of financial difficulty and rehabilitation at *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Whitaker emerged in 1857 with an idea for a new trade journal. Like the others, it would be largely funded by advertisements, but this time would focus primarily on the requirements of the retailers.

With this third attempt at business Whitaker moved to a different part of London. He initially worked from a building at 17 Warwick Square, a small square off Warwick Lane between the Oxford Arms coaching inn and Stationer's Hall. The address was prominently printed on the front page of *The Bookseller* as '17 Warwick Square, Paternoster Row', clearly signalling his presence in a location long associated with the book trade. He subsequently moved to other addresses in the same area, first to 5 Warwick Square in August 1859, then to 10 Warwick Square in April 1865. 197 After one last move around the corner to 12 Warwick Lane in October 1869, the business remained there until the building was destroyed by the Luftwaffe in December 1940.

In 1858, the area was still laid out on medieval street patterns and boundaries and awaiting the Victorian re-building of the 1860s. John Summerson described the architecture as 'still almost uniformly Georgian and domestic', and 'a city that lit itself by candles and oil lamps', but the character of the area was changing as residents left the City for the new suburbs. ¹⁹⁸ It was a very crowded place, 'a most mysterious and unfathomable labyrinth of lanes and alleys, streets and courts, thronged with a bustling multitude'. ¹⁹⁹ This crowd was increased daily by the 200,000 people who commuted into

¹⁹⁶ BKS, June 1858, p.242 and August 1858, p.350. Less than a year later he was back in business at 44 Paternoster Row publishing fiction according to BKS, March 1859, p.786.

¹⁹⁷ 17 and 5 Warwick Square were the business and residential addresses of William Hayden, who briefly injected funds into the business as Whitaker's proprietor in 1860. See *BKS*, September 1859, p.1257; April 1865, p.223.

¹⁹⁸ John Summerson, 'The Victorian Rebuilding of the City of London', *The London Journal*, 3, 2 (1977), 163-85, (p.163).

¹⁹⁹ quoted in David Kynaston, *The City of London* (London: Random House, 1994), p.140.

the City to work in the warehouses, counting houses and myriad small businesses that were crammed into the formerly domestic buildings. The resident population reached its peak of 130,000 in 1851 and then declined sharply over the next fifty years to a mere 27,000 by the end of the century. One of the contributory factors to this decline of the residential population was the abolition in 1858 of the regulations that restricted trading only to those who were both resident and members of one of the City's Guild or Livery companies.

This location had several practical advantages for Whitaker. It was close to Stationers Hall in Ave Maria Lane, where he could check for bibliographic details of new books if they had been registered by their publishers.²⁰¹ There was also easy access to other publishers and booksellers in the West End as one of the major east-west routes through London ran down the newly built Cannon Street, passed St Paul's Cathedral, along Ludgate Hill, and on to Fleet Street and the Strand. The General Post Office was nearby at St Martin le Grand, which was not only the primary sorting office for London but also the starting point for the frequent scheduled mail coaches that travelled throughout the country delivering passengers, mail, newspapers, periodicals and books. There were also several coaching inns in Ludgate Hill and St Martin le Grand, in addition to the Oxford Arms which was just a few doors away in Warwick Square.

The move was both practical and symbolic. He was moving into the traditional heart of the English book trade. Long associated with book production, the area around St Paul's

²⁰⁰ David Owen, *The Government of Victorian London 1855-1889: The Metropolitan Board of Works, the vestries, and the City Corporation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), p.227.
²⁰¹ Although the 1842 Copyright Act stated that publishers should register their titles at Stationers Hall, many did not. William Longman gave evidence to the 1878 Royal Commission stating that his firm hardly ever registered their books. See Copyright Commission: The Royal Commissions and the Report of the Commissioners, Minutes of Evidence, cl. 337, p.21,

 $[\]frac{https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/result/pqpdocumentview?accountid=14511\&groupid=96099\&pgId=279ae806-57e6-4079-8dd7-5e171985db91~[accessed~21~July~2021].$

Cathedral and Paternoster Row was described by James Raven as 'one of the greatest publishing centres in Europe':

From here, throughout the nineteenth century, booksellers despatched books, magazines and other printed works not only to the country towns of England, but also to the colonies in North America, the Caribbean, India, Africa, Australasia and the Far East.²⁰²

From the eighteenth century, a heavy concentration of printers, booksellers, publishers and allied trades clustered together in the alleyways, lanes, courtyards and streets, passing leases on to colleagues within the book trade for decades.²⁰³ Coffee houses and taverns such as the Chapter Coffee House and the Queen's Head were convivial meeting places for mixing commerce and sociability among printers, booksellers and others with shares in copyrights to agree deals to finance, produce, and distribute new books.²⁰⁴ The concentration of book trade activity here was such that:

Virtually every building in the precinct – coffeehouses, printing houses, bookshops, and even simple residences – had a role to play in the making and moving of words. In this area, the topography of print could be measured on a small scale, in feet and yards. ²⁰⁵

Although several important London houses had established their businesses in the fashionable districts of the West End, such as John Hatchard in Piccadilly, John Murray in Abermarle Street, and Richard Bentley in New Burlington Street, a cluster of the so-called 'great' publishers or houses remained in the streets around Paternoster Row and St Paul's Churchyard. Many of these publishers, such as Longmans and Seeley, were proprietors of *The Publishers' Circular* and had been members of the committee that oversaw the Booksellers' Regulations, but newer firms were also located here. Although the book trade had become more dispersed and no longer needed to spread the financial risks of producing

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²⁰² James Raven, 'London and the central sites of the English book trade', *CHBB*5, pp.291-330, (p.297).

²⁰³ Raven, 'London and the central Sites of the English Book Trade', p.303.

²⁰⁴ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.67.

²⁰⁵ Johns, p.68.

books by sharing copyrights, the advantages of proximity remained for building business relationships and gaining access to business intelligence. The new location put Whitaker close to many of his core advertisers and the sources of trade information he would need for his new venture.

Conclusion

Joseph Whitaker was not born to be a publisher or a bookseller, but he followed his personal interests into the book trade. His period of training ended just as steam-powered printing machines and other technological innovations transformed printing capacity and, along with changes to the tax and regulatory regime, helped to lower the cost of producing and distributing books. A demand for cheaper books led to greater competition between booksellers, but the removal of the already minimal mechanisms for oversight or scrutiny of the commercial activities of booksellers and publishers exacerbated some of the problems that affected an already precarious business environment. After recovering from insolvency, Whitaker's period of rehabilitation led him to realise that the growing and increasingly competitive market for books necessitated a new kind of information service. His own proclivity for collecting and organising facts and figures was well-suited for the publication he had in mind, a journal to help booksellers access and manage information about books available for sale and help them understand the shifting currents of a market in flux. A move to the established heart of the English book trade in Paternoster Row placed him in the ideal location from which to provide this service.

Chapter Three: The Bookseller: A Handbook of British and Foreign Literature

Introduction

This chapter establishes the rationale for Whitaker's new journal and examines his editorial priorities and the methods he employed to gain the trust of his readers. This is followed by an analysis of the organization of its contents to demonstrate how the journal fulfilled its functions as an information service.

Joseph Whitaker launched *The Bookseller* in January 1858 to circulate information about new books and other business intelligence. He boasted that the new journal would provide readers with 'all that is passing in the book world'. It was an information service consisting of a comprehensive monthly record of publishers' new books available for sale, and all the business news and commentary he thought were required for marketing and selling new books.² It also provided a means of communication between and among members of the book trade so they could share their experiences and knowledge and exchange their views.

Whitaker's intention was to advertise a more comprehensive and diverse selection of books than the rival publications by encouraging publishers to supply advertisements that included their 'complete lists of the works recently issued'. By promoting the idea of complete lists originating from a broader range of publishers, *The Bookseller* could claim to represent a greater range and variety of books available for sale. The new journal also aimed to provide a programme of trade news and commentary, and previews of a wide range of new books to furnish booksellers of all sizes with information, from the large metropolitan and

¹ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

² In the context of this thesis, 'marketing' refers to the creation of the demand for both a particular title and books in general through advertising, book reviews, and other strategies. 'Selling' refers to the financial transaction between retailer and customer.

traditional retailers to the small, provincial bookseller who also stocked stationery and other sundry items.

Whitaker's ambitions for *The Bookseller* were clearly articulated in the first issue.

The new journal would be an authoritative source of specialist information:

This work is intended primarily for the use of booksellers and publishers, furnishing them with a handy book of reference, and doing for the Bookselling trade what *Bradshaw* does for the Railways, but so conducted that it may be equally useful to the Book-buyer and to the Bookseller.³

Bradshaw was italicized as if it were a single title, but 'Bradshaw' was more than just a monthly guide for railway travellers. Although the timetables were not easy to read, the 'Bradshaw' name was a trusted brand that had rationalised the bewilderingly complex system of competing railway routes, timetables, and ticket prices, and made the information available in an accessible format at an affordable price. By invoking the Bradshaw name, Whitaker was inviting readers to believe that his own journal would be a similarly trusted handbook that was designed to help booksellers manage the ever-growing volume of publishers' offerings and to prepare them to participate fully in the challenging commercial environment of the Victorian book trade.

Moss and Hosgood argue that by studying trade journals it is possible to glimpse 'the nature of the various businesses and trades themselves, the experience of those who participated in them and the institutional and associational world which emerged to influence much of the rhetoric and language of the business community'. A study of the information service Whitaker provided in *The Bookseller* offers this opportunity for the Victorian book trade. This analysis is valuable as the working lives and experiences of Victorian booksellers

³ *BKS*, January 1858, p.2.

⁴ For more details on Bradshaw's guides and other timetables see Mike Esbester, 'Nineteenth-Century Timetables and the History of Reading', *Book History*, 12, (2009), 156-85.

⁵ Moss and Hosgood, 'The Financial and Trade Press', p.200. Other examples include John McCusker, The Early History of 'Lloyds List', *Historical Research*, 64, 155, (1991), 427-31; David Kynaston, *The Financial Times: A Centenary History*, (London: Viking, 1988).

are not well understood. According to James Raven, this is largely due to the paucity of archival material and their absence from the memoirs of the 'Victorian guardians of book trade knowledge', such as Charles Knight and Edward Marston.⁶ Although the majority of booksellers and publishers were small traders whose experiences are not recorded and whose life stories are lost to history, *The Bookseller* captured their concerns, recorded their successes, and preserved accounts of the discussions and debates about the nature of their trade. The circulation of this information contributed to a growing trade-wide consensus of the most pressing matters that eventually led to reforms of the most damaging business practices such as underselling. The continued absence of trade institutions to facilitate or mediate these debates was a source of regret for Whitaker but makes the role of *The Bookseller* in the historical record all the more valuable.

As stated in Chapter One, very few documents from the Whitaker archive survived the bombing of London, so much of the evidence for this and the following chapters relies on testimony from third parties and on the issues of *The Bookseller* itself. The retrospective accounts of the early years recorded in the hundredth edition in April 1866 and the fiftieth anniversary edition in January 1908 have been especially useful. Reliance on these accounts runs the risk of accepting their necessarily celebratory and cleansed version of events so, where possible, corroboration has been sought from other sources; but in many instances, for example letters from readers and Whitaker's own interpretation of market conditions, *The Bookseller* was the only place this information was recorded.

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⁶ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.374.

Whitaker's rationale for *The Bookseller*

After 1852 and the abolition of the Booksellers' Association, the era of 'free trade in books' offered new opportunities for booksellers. However, these were accompanied by new kinds of risks. The modern, steam-powered publishing industry enabled mass-produced books to be issued in larger numbers and for a more diverse readership than previously. This new mass-market attracted new entrants to the trade which led to a more diversified retail sector and greater competition between booksellers. Although cheaper books could be sold in larger numbers, the bookseller's profit margin on each copy sold was narrower, resulting in booksellers having to sell more copies in order to achieve the same levels of return. Unregulated discounting, or 'underselling', had been a problem before 1852 but now, without any trade-wide mechanisms to limit or regulate the practice, the risks inherent in bookselling intensified.

In contrast to Whitaker and other 'lettered bookmen' of earlier generations, the new cadre of booksellers did not necessarily have an apprenticeship or any previous training in the book trade. Some had worked in other trades and opened businesses in retirement like John Catchpole, a former miner from Derbyshire who opened a small bookshop after leaving the mines. As demonstrated in the entries in Hodson's 1855 Directory, many bookshops combined selling books with other products and activities such as stationery, jobbing printing, and news-vending, underlining the need for broad-based knowledge of the business. The Bookseller would provide these readers with the information they needed about new books and the book trade in general.

⁷ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, pp.63-68 for sections on lower priced titles produced in greater volume than the high priced.

⁸ Raven, *The Business of Books*, p.323.

⁹ Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz Gerhardt Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe 1780-1914* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.68.

¹⁰ Hodson's Directory.

One of Whitaker's main concerns was the lack of a trade body to monitor commercial standards and activities, and to regulate pricing. Even before the demise of the former association in 1852 there were tensions and conflicts within the book trade – book historian Frank Mumby observed that there was 'little internal peace in the English trade in the whole course of its existence' – but without a formal trade organisation there was little hope that the 'scattered forces' of the bookselling trade could settle the 'conflicting interests' that afflicted them. 11 Mumby did not refer to *The Bookseller* in this context but, as the next section demonstrates, it was also Whitaker's view that the welfare of the whole trade, booksellers and publishers alike, depended on cooperation and at least some agreed standards for business practices. As a former bookseller and recently discharged insolvent, Whitaker was all too aware of the precariousness of the business and his experience as a bookseller qualified him to understand what sort of information was required to inform and support his trade colleagues.

Whitaker's first aim was to provide a better source of sales information for new books than was currently available. A retrospective account of the early years of *The Bookseller* reproduced his complaint about the difficulty of finding information about new books:

I wanted to-day to refer to the exact title of one of Messrs. Hatchard's works, but I could not find it, and had to hunt for a number of the 'Christian Observer'. The same remark would apply to many other publishers, Longmans, and perhaps Murray, being the sole exceptions. As to Scottish publishers, I do not know where (except in their own catalogues) to find the titles or prices of any of their books. 12

He noted that it was 'practically impossible to find the exact title or publisher of many books then issued unless by a house of the front rank'. Only the largest publishers regularly advertised in *The Publishers' Circular* and *Bent's*; the smaller, the provincial, and the Scottish publishers were under-represented. If Whitaker, an experienced bookman based in

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¹¹ Mumby, *The Romance of Bookselling*, pp.342-43.

¹² BKS, January 1908, p.9.

¹³ Ibid.

central London, had difficulty tracking down these details, it would have been nearly impossible for anyone less well-connected or well-placed.

The new journal promised its readers a full account of books currently available for sale. Each month would include a complete list of books published or announced during the month in Great Britain, the United States and the Continent, publishers' advertisements of their 'complete lists of [...] works recently issued', literary and trade news, and previews of the most important titles of the month. For publishers it promised to be an effective medium for advertising their current titles while booksellers would have a journal specifically dedicated to their needs. In addition, readers were encouraged to participate in debates that affected their businesses by contributing their views in the letters page. By offering the journal as a forum where 'the feelings and opinions of the trade' could be represented, *The Bookseller* would be more than just a means of communicating information, it would be a virtual public square that connected bookselling colleagues dispersed across the country. 15

Whitaker sought advice from two or three friends about the likelihood of success for his idea but was told that it was 'an impossibility'. ¹⁶ Undeterred, he sent copies of the prospectus anonymously in plain wrappers to selected trade colleagues to present his plan. ¹⁷ He calculated that he could produce a hundred pages per issue in a format that was small and light enough to be sent through the post for just a penny. ¹⁸ *Bent's* and *The Publishers' Circular* were much smaller and usually consisted of between sixteen and twenty-four pages. The boldness of the plan worried his friend Mr Arnett, who, while agreeing that the existing trade papers were full of 'defects and shortcomings', nonetheless baulked at the proposed

¹⁴ BKS, January 1858, front page.

¹⁵ BKS, April 1866, p.295.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ BKS, January 1908, p.11.

size of *The Bookseller*.¹⁹ Fortunately, the response from the recipients of the prospectus was positive and he was promised support 'such as he never dreamed of receiving' that convinced him to proceed.²⁰ Two thousand copies of the first issue were sent free to 'almost every person in the trade', and two months later he reported that 'a large number' had already become subscribers.²¹ Whitaker later claimed that almost one thousand signed up in the first few weeks.²²

The Bookseller was intended as a practical resource, a storehouse of book trade information designed for regular and repeated use. To this end, bound copies of the previous year's issues were offered along with special portfolios with which to preserve a year's worth of back issues.²³ Initially, Whitaker wanted to appeal to people with general literary interests: to 'book-buyers, secretaries of book clubs, reading societies and institutions, and literary men generally'.²⁴ He even suggested that two editions would be printed, one for the trade and one for 'general circulation', both priced at 5s post-free.²⁵ Nonetheless, the mission of *The Bookseller* remained tightly focused on the needs of the bookselling trade.

Editorial priorities

Whitaker was editor of *The Bookseller* for seventeen years, from 1858 until 1875, when he stepped back in favour of his eldest son, Joseph Vernon Whitaker.²⁶ This was a period of some difficulty for the book trade when book production was 'flat and sluggish' after years of

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¹⁹ Ibid. Mr Arnett may have been a fellow bookseller at Parkers. His name and address, 377 Strand, appeared in a list of subscribers to the Paris Relief Fund set up by the trade in March 1871, p.199.

²⁰ BKS, April 1866, p.295. It has not been possible to find a copy of the prospectus.

²¹ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

²² BKS, April 1866, p.295.

²³ *BKS*, January 1859, p.646.

²⁴ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

²⁵ BKS, November 1859, p.1322.

²⁶ Whitaker junior was referred to as Vernon.

rapid growth and before a second period of nineteenth-century technological innovation led to the 'take off in mass production' after the mid-1870s.²⁷ The evidence of the problems for bookselling could later be observed in the monthly accounts in *The Bookseller* of firms that had ceased trading, merged with other businesses, or been added to the lists of bankrupts and insolvents. His editorial priority was to improve the quality and quantity of the information available to booksellers and help them make good business decisions. This would be achieved by providing 'every matter of interest to the bookseller'.²⁸

To gain the trust of his readers, Whitaker needed to establish himself as an authority on trade matters and present *The Bookseller* as both an accurate source of information and a trusted means of communication. Andrew Pettegree concurs that the reputation of early business communications and circulars depended on the trustworthiness of their sources.²⁹ Similarly, the credibility of *The Bookseller* relied on developing a reputation for impartiality as well as accuracy, reassurance that livelihoods or reputations would not be harmed by acting on intelligence acquired from the journal. For instance, booksellers depended on accurate bibliographic details to fulfil a customer's order for the particular edition of a book and any errors in the bibliographic or sales data had to be quickly corrected.³⁰ Whitaker assured his readers that 'we are at some pains in procuring reliable information', and reports of admissions of mistakes were not common.³¹ Any errors were corrected quickly to maintain the accuracy of the record, either in an editorial comment or by publishing letters that clarified misunderstandings or mistakes.³² A correction appeared after *The Bookseller* had incorrectly admonished a publisher, Messrs. Hogg, for printing two poems without

²⁷ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, pp.7-24, p.106, and pp.122-24.

²⁸ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

²⁹ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know about Itself* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), p.48.

³⁰ PC also printed corrections, for example the corrected price of a new book 1 March 1858, p.94.

³¹ BKS, March 1859, p.787.

³² Examples of corrections of reporting include in February 1862, p.114; February 1868, p.15; October 1874, p.818; February 1875, p.90.

acknowledgement of the original American publisher.³³ Hogg wanted the report amended to ensure that his reputation was not harmed by the apparent flouting of a custom that was, according to an editorial aside from Whitaker, 'rarely practised by respectable publishers'.³⁴ Even seemingly trivial errors were rectified if important enough to the correspondent, as in the case of Charles Speight, who wrote that the mistake in nomenclature of his company, Barfoot and Speight, would otherwise 'cause some inconvenience'.³⁵

While mistakes were infrequent, there was one occasion when *The Bookseller* misled its readers for decades. In a story of wider interest than just the book trade, it was claimed that *The Bookseller* had been authorised to confirm as false the rumour that Robert Chambers was the author of *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, published anonymously in 1844.³⁶ Three months later Whitaker hinted that he knew the identity of the author but could not yet reveal the name.³⁷ The true story, that Robert Chambers was indeed the author of the work, was not revealed until 1884.³⁸ It is possible that Whitaker himself had been hoodwinked by a mischievous publisher or was a willing accomplice in an effort to preserve the privacy of the author.

This concern with accuracy extended to material and information sourced from outside sources. Articles from literary periodicals and newspapers such as *The Literary Gazette*, *The Athenaeum*, and *The City Press* were regularly reprinted in the early years with the extracts properly credited.³⁹ To further develop readers' trust, Whitaker assured them that *The Bookseller* was impartial and had no ties to any special interests, unlike its main rival.

³³ *BKS*, January 1859, p.648.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ BKS, February 1868, p.15. Coincidentally, Speight later became one of Whitaker's longest serving employees.

³⁶ BKS, December 1858, p.583. See James Secord's *The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History Of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) for a fuller account of the publication history of this book.

³⁷ BKS, March 1859, p.787.

³⁸ *BKS*, May 1884, p.460.

³⁹ For instance, see February 1858, p.59; November 1859, p.1323 and p.1327.

Many of his readers would have known that *The Publishers' Circular* was owned by a consortium of many of the same leading publishers who had controlled the Booksellers' Association. By contrast, *The Bookseller* was free to represent the interests of a broader constituency:

The Bookseller, being entirely unconnected with any publishing house, has endeavoured honestly to secure the support of all by placing all on precisely the same footing, and consulting the interests of the many rather than those of the few.⁴⁰

The commitment to impartiality was reinforced by maintaining the convention of unsigned articles and using pseudonyms such as 'A Country Bookseller' or 'B.O.O.K' for contributors' letters. Although some general interest magazines and literary reviews such as *Macmillan's Magazine* (1859) and *The Cornhill Magazine* (1860) had started to use named writers, according to *Blackwood's Magazine* anonymous writing was still 'the cornerstone of class journalism'. For Whitaker it was also a matter of editorial responsibility and pride that enabled him to present the publication with a coherent editorial message. He thought that signed articles reflected badly on the editor's skills and that 'the signature of articles could only be a mark of feeble association and a substitute for imperfect editorship'. The editorial content of the journal was his responsibility and reflected his views unless otherwise indicated, a position he later clarified:

how much better it would be if the reviews and magazines themselves were supposed to hold certain opinions, and that when an article appeared it should represent the supposed sense of the body which the magazine itself represented.⁴⁴

⁴¹ For more detail on this convention see Oscar Maurer, 'Anonymity vs Signature in Victorian Reviewing', *Studies in English*, 27, 1 (1948), 1-27.

⁴⁰ *BKS*, July 1860, p.412.

⁴² *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1859, p.184. The slight differences between class and trade journalism are discussed in the next chapter.

⁴³ *BKS*, April 1863, p.215.

⁴⁴ *BKS*, January 1872, p.5.

The assurance of impartiality freed *The Bookseller* from accusations of bias to express literary judgements. In endorsing a defence of Disraeli's novel *Lothair* in *The Standard* after a scathing review had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 'the Toriest of all Tory magazines', the claim was quickly made that *The Bookseller* was 'neither Whig, Tory, nor Radical'. Whitaker's own personal political leanings were not obvious but were later revealed in a private letter to William Gladstone, the former leader of the Liberal Party, whose acquaintance he had made through his Oxford connections. Whitaker admitted sympathy for the Liberal reforms:

Speaking for myself I may say that I owe everything I possess to the facilities given me by Liberal measures – the penny post, the abolition of the paper duty and in family matters have been able to bring up an unusually large family (15 children) with a large amount of comfort owing to the freedom of the tariff, and the great extension of business caused by the liberal (including Peel's) legislation of the past thirty years – I feel therefore that upon me the Liberal Party has a claim. 46

A muted political stance, not untypical for men of his background, allowed Whitaker to present the journal as egalitarian and inclusive of all parts of the book trade.⁴⁷ *The Bookseller* claimed to be 'intensely catholic' in outlook and attracted advertisers and subscribers from across the social, intellectual, and political landscape, from the most traditional of the leading publishers to the newer and perhaps more commercially adventurous firms:

The Hatchards, the Rivingtons, the Parkers, and other champions of orthodoxy meet in our pages, as on common ground, with the Trubners, the Longmans, and the Williamses and other advocates for free thought; while among our subscribers we can reckon Parsees, Mahometans, Greek churchmen, Roman Catholics, and Lutherans, in addition to those at home who each from his own point of view is orthodox.⁴⁸

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⁴⁵ BKS, July 1870, p.569.

⁴⁶ British Library, Gladstone letters, 12 April 1876, ADD MS, 44449 fol.258.

⁴⁷ According to Crossick and Haupt, the petite bourgeoisie supported liberal policies and tended to conduct their political actions in local, business and trade affairs, see p.162.

⁴⁸ BKS, July 1865, p.427.

From the earliest issues readers from across the trade were encouraged to use *The Bookseller* as a forum for debate by contributing information and letters to the journal and to share their experiences and concerns with trade colleagues. According to business historian Mark Casson, the exchange of information in a business context is an important ingredient in the creation of social bonds between and amongst individuals and organisations, a crucial network function that assures the quality of business information and lowers the cost of communicating this information to a wide group. Press historians have noted how this kind of reader engagement was characteristic of the nineteenth-century press, helping to resolve differences of opinion within and amongst groups of readers. The journalist and editor W.

T. Stead characterised the press as a 'vast agora or assembly of the whole community' and recognised the power it had to effect social change by disseminating information and fostering community affiliation. For ordinary booksellers, Whitaker's journal provided the opportunity for them to participate in trade discourse and consider themselves part of a trading community.

Contributions were selected for publication based on the criteria of their usefulness, in Whitaker's view, to 'the vendors of books'. The airing of grievances and exchanges of views was encouraged in the hope that a resolution might be reached. Some exchanges were considered important enough to run over several months and were useful demonstrations of how delicate relations could be between publishers and booksellers. Despite the removal of all trade regulations in 1852, some suppliers continued to refuse stock to booksellers accused of underselling their titles. One bookseller, Thomas Bosworth, wrote a series of letters from

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⁴⁹ BKS, April 1866, p.295.

⁵⁰ Casson, *Information and Organization*, p.117.

⁵¹ Laurel Brake and Julie Codell, 'Introduction', in *Encounters in the Victorian Press: Authors, Editors, Readers*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Julie Codell (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1-6, (p.2).

⁵² W. T. Stead, 'Government by Journalism', *The Contemporary Review*, May 1886, 653-74, (p.654).

⁵³ BKS, May 1860, p.276.

1867 to 1868 about his experience of 'rattening' after a wholesaler refused to supply him with books. Rattening was the practice of forced compliance with trade union regulations, and Bosworth complained that wholesalers Hamilton, Adams & Co had closed his account because he insisted on selling books at discounted prices.⁵⁴ It was reported that mixed responses had been received from the trade with some supporting Bosworth's stance and others applauding his comeuppance for underselling.⁵⁵ Nine months later, extracts from a pamphlet Bosworth had produced to further his case were printed that revealed the methods used by publishers and wholesalers to monitor the destinations of their books in order to discourage underselling:

The method adopted, I believe, is this: the books sold to each wholesale house are marked inside with a distinguishing mark; emissaries are sent from the publishers to purchase copies of me; and thus the channels through which I get my supplies are discovered and successively closed. ⁵⁶

Exemplifying its role as an even-handed if self-appointed moderator, the view of *The Bookseller* was that each party had a case; Bosworth had every right to sell the copies he had legally acquired at whatever price he chose, although publishers also had to protect their own interests and maintain the perceived value of their books. The conclusion was that the book trade should try to work together for the good of all:

The Bookseller has all along adhered to the opinion that fair prices might be obtained for books, if the leading publishers and the four wholesale houses would honestly help the retail trade.⁵⁷

These grievances may never be resolved but the exposure and discussion of the issues presented opportunities to consider the value and ramifications of certain practices and to appreciate different points of view.

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⁵⁴ *BKS*, July 1867, p.512.

⁵⁵ *BKS*, August 1867, p.611.

⁵⁶ BKS, March 1868, pp.123-24.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.124.

While The Bookseller represented itself as an impartial forum, the editorial tone was set by Whitaker and reflected his priorities. As editor, he was both an institutionalist and a moderniser. As an experienced bookman, he had a high regard for regulation and adherence to longstanding trade conventions, but he also held an unsentimental conviction that some of the trade's business practices were in need of reform. His ire was particularly aimed at underselling, which was routinely referred to as a damaging practice, as 'evil', 'ruinous', or 'a vexed subject'. 58 He had concluded that booksellers' low confidence in their own expertise was part of the problem as it left them vulnerable to exploitation by both suppliers and customers. There were reports of 'scores of instances' where customers had felt emboldened enough to haggle over prices in 'a manner they would feel ashamed to do with their butcher or tailor'. 59 An example was given of a 30s book on sale only a few days after publication at a price that gave the bookseller only 1s above the trade price. ⁶⁰ For Whitaker, bookselling was a skilled occupation, 'rather like a profession than a trade', and required a deep knowledge of literary and bibliographic history. 61 As many customers were educated men clergymen, barristers, and members of Parliament - booksellers had to be able to converse about the content and merits of their books as well as know their prices and formats. If booksellers were better informed, especially about 'the present ruinous system' [of underselling], they could resist the temptation to cheapen their stock.⁶²

Booksellers had to develop greater pride in their work and foster a principled collective identity. Their lack of confidence in and appreciation of their special status was misplaced:

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⁵⁸ BKS, June 1858, p.241; February 1859, p.722; April 1959, p.861 (nb a printer's error incorrectly numbered this page 361).

⁵⁹ *BKS*, February 1859, p.722.

⁶⁰ BKS, February 1859, p.722.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Cannot booksellers generally be made to feel that their profession is of a little higher order than that of snuff or tobacco dealers?⁶³

On a later occasion, and evoking the success of his Oxford friends the Tractarians in reviving the Anglican clergy with their series of *Tracts for Our Times*, Whitaker suggested lessons could be learned from their methods.⁶⁴ The 'first object' of the Tractarians had been to use the tracts to 'make clergymen alive to their position as clergy, to make them feel that their caste was superior to that of the laity'.⁶⁵ Once armed with this sense of superiority, the clergy could recognise their common purpose and 'could be moved collectively'.⁶⁶ Booksellers needed to find a similar sense of pride and collective spirit:

If we can raise something like an *esprit de corps* in the trade, we may then hope to do something more: no good will be effected without the spirit of association being evoked, and although this will be gradual work, it may be effected in time – then, but not till then, may some uniform plan of operation be determined upon. ⁶⁷

Whitaker could not have known it then but there would be neither sufficient *esprit de corps*, the spirit of association, nor any uniform plan until the 1890s. As illustrated in greater detail in Chapter Four, his repeated pleas for the book trade to form associations went unheeded.

In the meantime, he advised booksellers to read *The Bookseller* to improve their understanding of the changing market for books, including the new kinds of readers at the lower ends of the social scale. Perhaps prompted by Wilkie Collins' recent essay in *Household Words* on the vast potential readership hidden amongst the 'Unknown Public', booksellers were advised to look beyond their usual coterie of literary customers. They could familiarise themselves with the popular lower-priced books by travelling to the poorer parts of London and the outskirts of towns and studying the shopwindows of booksellers who

65 Ibid.

⁶³ BKS, August 1863, p.487.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Wilkie Collins, 'The Unknown Public', Household Words, No. 439 (21 August 1858), 217-222.

catered to people who read cheap literature.⁶⁹ Whitaker was particularly impressed with the respectable nature of the books in the 'notorious' area around London's Seven Dials and was 'delighted to see the change in public taste'.⁷⁰

Although a better understanding of the market was important, he also knew that there were structural forces and imbalances within the book trade that put booksellers at a disadvantage. Publishers held the balance of power by controlling the supply of books, creating the potential for misuses of that market power or the exploitation of an unfair advantage. While having no power himself to change these dynamics, Whitaker could at least highlight the risks for booksellers. For instance, the move by Simpkin Marshall to larger premises in Stationers Hall Court prompted warnings that this expansion meant that they would now 'monopolize all the London trade'. Another source of concern was Mudie's Select Circulating Library. Described as 'an eyesore to many booksellers' for having a 'monopoly of public patronage', the conclusion was that its enormous influence had become 'an abuse of power' perpetrated by its management. 72 The library was also accused of bias and of acting improperly with the 'arbitrary rejection' of respectable books because Mr Mudie disagreed with their contents.⁷³ Whitaker was not generally hostile to Mudie and later defended him against 'a virulent personal attack' by *The Literary Gazette*, but he did plead with Mudie 'to exercise your great powers with some judgement and to remember that even kings are but mortal'. 74 It was perhaps with this warning still in mind that it was later noted that Mudie would 'no longer enjoy the entire library monopoly of the Metropolis' after W. H. Smith's Railway Library started with tempting offerings for travellers.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ *BKS*, September 1859, p.1205.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

 $^{^{71}}$ BKS, April 1959, p.858. This concern was prescient as, after a series of consolidations, Simpkins did in fact become the only wholesaler left in London by 1889 after the amalgamation with Hamilton, Adams, Kent & Co. 72 BKS, April 1859, p.863; May 1859, p.926. The issue concerned the outsized influence on editorial decisions where some books were rumoured to be revised at Mudie's behest.

⁷³ *BKS*, April 1859, p.863.

⁷⁴ BKS, October 1860, p.613; May 1861, p.275.

⁷⁵ BKS, May 1862, p.309.

That Whitaker was right to be wary of monopoly power is exemplified by a story that neither *The Bookseller* nor *The Publishers' Circular* was able to report due to the extreme secrecy with which the matter was guarded. In order to stave off bankruptcy, Mudie's, the largest bulk buyer for many publishers, had to be re-formed in 1864 as a limited company and offer half of its shares to publishers, including Murray, Blackwood and Bentley. As David Finkelstein recounts, should the rest of the book trade have realised the perilous state of Mudie's finances, many publishers would have been ruined at an already depressed time for the book trade. It is impossible to know whether either Whitaker or Sampson Low was aware of the threat to the trade's welfare but Whitaker's views on behalf of retailers can be surmised from the letter printed in *The Bookseller* from 'MJM' after the announcement of the limited company:

Such publishers, being directors [of the new company], will be able to ensure the disposal of a given number of copies through that medium, there can be no question, but if they thus deliberately deploy their own artillery to supercede the middlemen and retailers, who have heretofore done duty so efficiently, they must not be surprised if *they* in return, have recourse to some measures indicative of their deep feeling of objection to such an alliance.⁷⁸

Although Mudie's was too important to publishers for it to fail, booksellers were less sympathetic as their own livelihoods were threatened by the library's custom of selling off retired copies at very low prices. The incident also underlines the delicately diplomatic balance Whitaker had to maintain on matters of financial consequence for the trade. He observed the ordinary day-to-day struggles of the book trade from a different point of view to those presented in *The Publishers' Circular*, and, although his primary concern was for the health and resilience of booksellers, the good will and financial stability of publishers was also essential to his business.

⁷⁶ David Finkelstein, "The Secret": British Publishers and Mudie's Struggle for Economic Survival 1861-64', *Publishing History*, 34 (1993), 21-50.

⁷⁷ Finkelstein, p.25 and p.29.

⁷⁸ BKS, August 1864, p.525.

Whitaker was a diligent editor and remained acutely attuned and responsive to the needs of the bookselling trade. He also worked hard, claiming that 'we editors not infrequently work 18 out of the 24 hours', and attributed the success of *The Bookseller* to 'the hearty manner' in which he worked.⁷⁹ Many of the obituaries confirmed his dedication to his work.⁸⁰ His single-minded commitment to *The Bookseller* and his readers was such that he published no other titles for the next ten years:

I threw myself into the work and, for a long time, did nothing else. It never reached my ideal, in fact the work just adapted itself to the requirements of the trade, and I was wise enough to let it go its own way and not force any of my hobbies into its pages.⁸¹

At the end of 1859, just two years after the launching, Whitaker congratulated his readers and himself for the improvements in the trade and claimed that, thanks to his efforts, there was 'no longer the apathy and ignorance of literature'. 82 While acknowledging that there were areas for improvement, the journal had fulfilled his main ambitions; booksellers were now 'thoroughly well-informed of all professional matters, as well as interested in them'. 83

Funding The Bookseller

The origin of the funds used to launch of *The Bookseller* is not known. Whitaker may have initially relied on credit arrangements with his printer, Messrs. Jack and Evans of Haymarket, and on wages from J. H. Parker for work on *The Gentleman's Magazine*, of which he remained editor until the end of 1859. ⁸⁴ In addition, there may have been some monies due for the titles he published with Parker, such as *Whitaker's Clergyman's Diary* and *Whitaker's*

⁷⁹ BKS, November 1871, p.914; quoted in a 50th year retrospective issue of *The Bookseller*, January 1908, p.11.

⁸⁴ A new editor for *The Gentleman's Magazine* was announced in *The Bookseller*, December 1859, p.1494.

⁸⁰ TWA. Obituaries Book.

⁸¹ Quoted in a 50th year retrospective issue of *The Bookseller*, January 1908, p.11.

⁸² *BKS*, December 1859, p.1490.

⁸³ Ibid

Penny Almanack. The Whitaker family maintained that he used his own savings. Regardless, any sums he started with did not last long and in early 1860 he managed to acquire additional investment from his landlord, William Hayden, an agent for country booksellers as well as a music publisher and dealer in musical instruments. Hayden became the proprietor of the journal. According to Joseph Shaylor, Hayden had played an important role for the country trade in the 1840s as the manager of the Booksellers' Small Parcel Depot, a 'forwarding house' that functioned as a forerunner of wholesalers such as Simpkin Marshall. It has also not been possible to discover how Whitaker was paid for his years of editorial work on *The Bookseller*. He may have negotiated a wage from his proprietor or retained the advertising fees as Sampson Low had done at *The Publishers' Circular*.

Once launched, subscription fees provided some income. The annual fee was set competitively low at 3s per year to build subscriptions quickly, undercut the rivals, and establish a reputation. Single issues cost 4d. By contrast, *Bent's* charged 8s annually and *The Publishers' Circular* 6s. However, *The Bookseller* rose to 4s in November 1858, and then to 5s in January 1860; Whitaker later admitted that he was forced to make this rise as 'the bulk of the work has increased beyond our original intention'. 88 Despite the rises, the much larger *Bookseller* remained cheaper than its rivals. Table 4 shows the comparative prices of the trade journals.

⁸⁵ Interview with David Whitaker, recorded 28 June 2012.

⁸⁶ Subscribers were instructed to pay their fees to William Henry Hayden at the *Bookseller* office in January 1860.

⁸⁷ Joseph Shaylor, *The Fascination of Books* (London: Simpkin Marshall Hamilton Kent and Co Ltd, 1912), p.186.

⁸⁸ BKS, November 1859, p.1322.

	Bent's Monthly	The Publishers' Circular Fortnightly	The Bookseller Monthly
1838	8s per annum 7d per issue	4s per issue 2d per issue	N/A
1858	8s per annum 7d per issue (6d unstamped)	6s per annum (8s per annum stamped) ⁸⁹ 3d per issue (4d per issue stamped)	3s per annum (post free) 4d per issue [to 4s in Nov 1858, 5s in Jan 1860]
1888	N/A		5s per issue

Table 4 Comparison of subscription rates 1838-1888

Only two months after the first issue, Whitaker declared that his gamble had worked and that the new journal had received 'a larger amount of support than was ever accorded to any similar work'. 90 He provided no evidence for this claim so an accurate calculation of the income from these subscribers is impossible. Instead, indicative estimates can be made. A perhaps optimistic list of 2000 subscribers would have grossed £400 in subscription income in the first year, rising to £500 the following year after the subscription rate increased to 5s.

According to Whitaker, the 'main support' for the journal derived from advertising fees. ⁹¹ In order to challenge the two established publications and attract sufficient advertising revenues, the new journal had to offer value for money. Consisting of fifty-six pages, the first issue of *The Bookseller* was twice as large as *The Publishers' Circular*. Fifty of those pages were devoted to advertising and presented publishers with a much larger showcase for their books. This was less than the hundred pages he had originally planned but the page numbers quickly grew over the next few issues. After the first year, the number of pages per issue was

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⁸⁹A stamped copy was more expensive as it could be sent through the post more than once allowing booksellers to forward copies to important customers for review.

⁹⁰ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

⁹¹ Ibid.

regularly over a hundred, and considerably longer for the December issues when the Christmas lists could extend to 250 pages or more.

On the basis of the prospectus and Whitaker's reputation, 129 publishers bought advertising space in the first issue. This compared to only 33 publishers advertising in *The* Publishers' Circular in the same month. 92 The list of advertisers' names was printed on the front page of each issue and referenced with the appropriate page number for their advertisement. The list highlighted the diverse range of advertisers on offer and established The Bookseller as a credible advertising medium. Although the majority of advertising publishers were based in London, entries were submitted from a range of locations further afield including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, and Norwich, as can be seen in the list in Fig. 8.93



Fig.8 The first page of *The Bookseller* January 1858

⁹² BKS, January 1858, p.1, and PC, 16 January 1858, p.1. (The 1 January issue did not list the advertisers at all.) ⁹³ *BKS*, January 1858, p.1.

The Bookseller was quickly adopted by more publishers, increasing the advertising pages throughout the first year and culminating with the December issue, which contained advertisements from 165 publishers. Although the number of advertisers fluctuated from month to month, The Bookseller consistently attracted more advertisers and carried more pages of advertising than The Publishers' Circular. Many publishers took out advertisements in both publications; only four of the advertisers in The Publishers' Circular did not also advertise in the first issue of The Bookseller. Some of the largest publishers, including Macmillan & Co, John Murray, Blackwood & Sons, and Whitaker's erstwhile employer J. H. Parker, were regular advertisers from the first issue. Even Sampson Low advertised his range of general titles in The Bookseller, implicitly acknowledging that the new journal rewarded the publishers who advertised in its pages by reaching readers his own journal might not.

Publishers were tempted with a range of advertising rates to suit all budgets, from a whole page at £2 10s to a single line for a mere 6d. The rates were for placement in a single issue; regular advertisers were enticed with discounts of approximately 50% for those who committed to at least 'twelve insertions'. ⁹⁴ Initially, the costs were lower than those of the rivals, but by October 1859 they were raised to three guineas for a whole page, the same level as *The Publishers' Circular*. ⁹⁵ These rates, shown in Table 5, remained at the same level for the rest of the century. The rates compared well with other trade journals. For instance, *The Ironmonger and Metal Trades Advertiser* charged 30s for a full page, 20s for half a page. ⁹⁶ *The Times*, with a larger but more general readership, charged much higher advertising rates ranging from 4s for 5 lines of a column, to 8s for 10 lines, and 18s for 20 lines, and carried fewer publishers' advertisements than the specialist book trade journals. ⁹⁷

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⁹⁴BKS, January 1858, p.2. It is not clear whether this means insertions in twelve issues or twelve advertisements of whatever size, e.g. twelve pages or twelve quarter pages.

⁹⁵ Eliot and Sutherland, p.5.

⁹⁶ Ironmonger and Metals Trades' Advertiser, June 1859, p.16.

⁹⁷ The Times' rates were listed in the December 1861 issues of The Bookseller, p.873.

1859	
Whole page	£2 10s
Half page	£1 8s
Quarter page	15s
Four lines	2s 6d
Per line	6d
Per twelve insertions	
Whole page	£1 10s
Half page	16s
Quarter page	9s
After October 1859	
Whole page	£3 3s
Half page	£1 15s
Quarter page	18s
Four lines	3s
Per line	6d

Table 5 Advertising rates in *The Bookseller* 98

Whitaker's financial strategy worked well, but, as with subscriber income, accurate or meaningful calculations of the advertising income are not possible without the ledger books. Table 6 offers an illustrative sample accounting of the likely income derived from advertising in two sample years fifteen years apart. No account was taken of the discounted rates that may have been agreed with regular advertisers. The figures reveal that from 1859 to 1876, advertising income rose by approximately 62%, from £120 9d to £195 19s 6s, suggesting that the publishers' confidence in *The Bookseller* as an effective advertising medium remained high.

⁹⁸ BKS, January 1858, p.2; October 1859, p.1272; January 1895, p.3.

May 1859	No of entries	Charge	Totals
Whole page	20	£2 10s	£50
Half page	15	£1 8s	£21
Third page	8	17s 6d	£7
Quarter page	23	15s	£17 5s
Half col <10 lines	47	6s	£1 15s
Small ads	11	6s	£3 6s
Non-book (third page)	2	17s 6d	£1 15s
Non-book (quarter page)	5	15s	£3 15s
Books wanted	151	3d	£1 17s 9d
Total			£120 0s 9d
May 1876			
Whole page	28	£3 3s	£88 4s
Half page	13	36s	£23 8s
Third page	6	25s	£7 10s
Quarter page	18	20s	£18
Sixth page	14	14s	£19 16s
Six lines	4	10s 6d	£2 2s
Four lines	20	3s 6d	£3 10s
Situations vacant	14	2s 6d	£1 15s
Assistants seeking posts	81	4s	£16 4s
Books for sale	58	6d	£1 9s
Books wanted	963	6d	£24 1s 6d
Total			£195 19d 6d

Table 6 Indicative advertising rates for May 1859 and May 1876

Despite hints that the journal had been financially draining, and that 'losses have been numerous', there were no reports of monetary trouble such as requests for funds, nor did

Whitaker beg his readers for help to boost circulation as he had with *The Penny Post*. ⁹⁹ In fact, *The Bookseller* was successful enough that after just four years earnings from the journal enabled him to afford the rent on a large family house in the leafy suburb of Enfield. ¹⁰⁰

The Bookseller's financial stability was strengthened in July 1860 with the acquisition of Bent's. Described by Whitaker as the longstanding trade 'oracle', Bent's proprietor decided to forge an alliance with 'a younger and more vigorous relation'. He was careful to reassure Bent's longstanding advertisers and readers by acknowledging the significance of the older title in the masthead on the title page:

The Bookseller: A Handbook of British and Foreign Literature
With which is incorporated
Bent's Literary Advertiser established in the Year 1802

The arrangement with *Bent's* was described as a 'purchase and amalgamation'. ¹⁰² It led to increased numbers of subscribers and advertisers and boosted *The Bookseller*'s Continental and international connections. It also resulted in a new proprietor, Edward Tucker, who was publisher of *The London Catalogue*, the retrospective catalogue that was later acquired by Sampson Low. ¹⁰³ By 1865, Whitaker was confident enough to claim that *The Bookseller* had superseded *The Publishers' Circular* as the 'chief literary advertising medium'. ¹⁰⁴ He finally became the proprietor of *The Bookseller* in August 1870. ¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ *BKS*, April 1866, p.295.

¹⁰⁰ TWA, 1862 lease of White Lodge.

¹⁰¹ BKS, July 1860, p.412.

¹⁰² BKS, April 1866, p.295.

¹⁰³ The English Catalogue of Books for 1862 was described as being the supplement to The London Catalogue and The British Catalogue and was published jointly by 'Sampson Low, Son & Co., Office of The Publishers' Circular' and 'Edward Tucker, Office of The Bookseller'. It is not clear when Tucker relinquished responsibility but in subsequent iterations of the catalogue only Low was listed on the title page.

¹⁰⁴ BKS, July 1865, p.427.

¹⁰⁵ BKS, August 1870, p.752. Whitaker was listed as the proprietor on the back page of the issue for the first time.

The Organisation of The Bookseller

The Bookseller differed in form and function from the earlier trade publications in a number of important ways. Firstly, the layout was designed to be easily navigable. Where *The Publishers' Circular* printed its editorial content in dense single columns, the text in *The Bookseller* was organised into double columns for greater visual clarity.

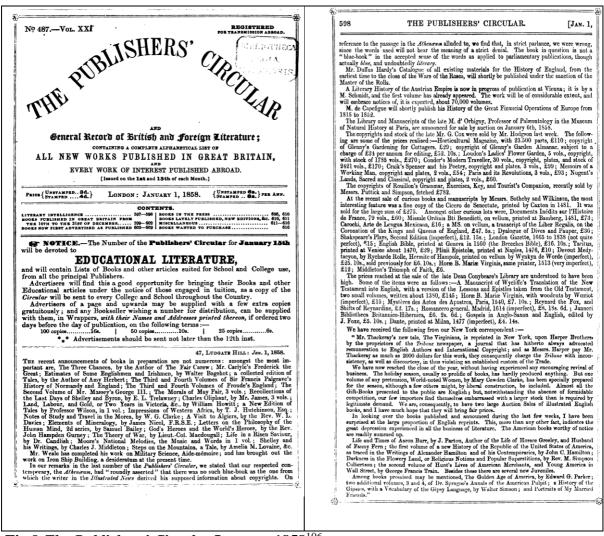


Fig.9 The Publishers' Circular January 1858¹⁰⁶

 $^{^{106}}$ PC, January 1858 pp.597-98. These were the only two editorial pages in this issue and were followed by the alphabetical list of new works now available and then advertisements of new books.

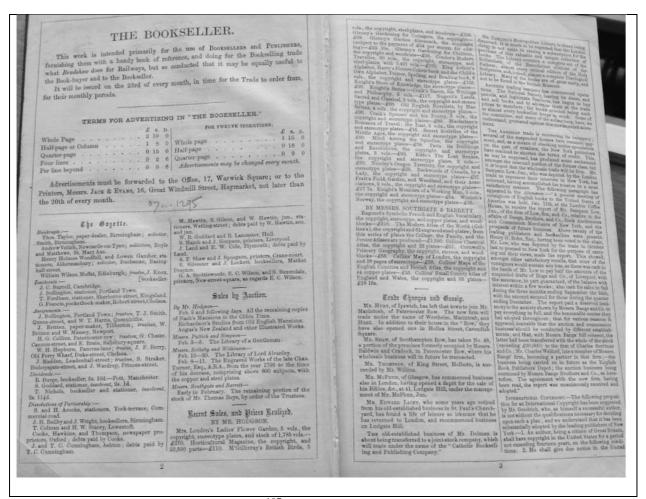


Fig.10 *The Bookseller* January 1858¹⁰⁷

Headings and capitalisation of the first few words separated the text and helped to direct the reader's attention. The stories were a mix of snippets of news alongside longer stories that sometimes ran over several paragraphs, or even several pages. Occasional in-depth feature articles were published over two or three issues, such as one titled 'Our Literary Journals' that presented exhaustive histories of the founding and influence of *The Literary Gazette* (1817) and the publications that followed such as *The Athenaeum* (1828). ¹⁰⁸

The editorial section was organised into several sections. The front page displayed the masthead and a list of the advertisers. Initially, the list included not only the advertisers in the current issue but also those who had advertised in previous issues. This practice not only

¹⁰⁷ BKS, January 1858, pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁸ BKS, February 1859, pp.729-32; March 1859, pp.794-95; May, pp.935-37.

helped booksellers find books that had been advertised in earlier issues but also kept the list of supporting publishers impressively full. 109 The advertiser list was followed by the 'Gazette' section. This was sourced from *The London Gazette*, the official government journal of record, and consisted of between a half and a whole page of lists of bankruptcies and insolvencies. The lists included details of the solicitors and trustees of businesses that had collapsed into insolvency or bankruptcy. These officials were responsible for managing any remaining liabilities and collecting and paying out monies owed to creditors. The Gazette was in effect a roll-call of businesses and partnerships as they formed and dissolved, and included the details of businesses to be sold by auction and the prices realised, as well as information of any dividends due to creditors. The monthly parade of dissolutions and new partnerships represented businesses from across the country and indicated both the dynamism and precariousness of bookselling nationwide:

THE GAZETTE.

Bankrupts :-

Alfred and Henry Arnold, Tottenham Court Road, bookseller. Solicitor, Mr. Dodd, Jun., New Broad Street.

Insolvent :-

J. E. Grant, Gaythorpe, Manchester, bookseller.

Assignment :-

W. C. Weekley, Cambridge, bookseller and stationer. Trustees—J. R. Mann, auctioneer, Cambridge, and G. A. H. Dean, Ludgate Hill, bookseller.

Dividends :-

J. Tonks, Birmingham, printer, first of 1s. 2d. Kinnears, Birmingham.

J. Harris, College Hill, stationer, first of 9d. Lee, Aldermanbury.

V. Butteris, Dartmouth, bookseller, first of 2s. 3d. Hirtzells, Exeter.

Dissolutions of Partnership :-

T. De la Rue & Co., Bunhill Row, stationers, so far as regards Thomas De la Rue.

Love & Barton, Manchester, stationers. Gilbert Brothers, Gracechurch Street, and S. & T. Gilbert, Copthall Court, booksellers.

Fig.11 Example of the Gazette section in May 1859¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ This practice stopped in the mid-1870s, possibly because there were enough advertisers to fill each list in each issue.

¹¹⁰ BKS, May 1859, p.922.

An index of the previous year's names appeared in each January issue along with the month in which the entry appeared for use as a list for future reference. These lists of names and locations of booksellers were valuable and not otherwise easily available to the ordinary bookseller. Trade directories such as *Kelly's* and *Kent's* listed businesses but were organised by city and county so a national overview was hard to acquire. To maintain their value, though, accuracy was essential, and any errors or ambiguities had to be quickly rectified.

John Smith of Poole Valley in Brighton requested that it be clarified that he was not the John Smith of Clifton Street Brighton who had been listed in *The London Gazette* as insolvent. The parade of names offered a national picture of an enterprising and varied trade but, given that the lists included business failures as well as new formations, they also underscored booksellers' fragility and vulnerability to happenstance. *The Bookseller*'s national reach helped to personalise the otherwise amorphous trade by naming booksellers and even allow some empathy for distressed trade colleagues.

The next section, 'Trade News and Literary Gossip', carried news gathered from across the bookselling trade and was invaluable business intelligence. The availability of this type of information meant that the claims and actions of publishers and booksellers could be challenged, measured, or analysed. This section was usually between four and twelve pages long and constituted a richly detailed compendium of market knowledge, much of which was unlikely to have been recorded anywhere else. *The Publishers' Circular* did include brief items of trade news but it was not until the late 1870s, and particularly in the 1880s after Edward Marston took over as editor, that coverage became more extensive and regularly included statistics and analysis of book production, book reviews, and editorial commentary.¹¹²

¹¹¹ BKS, October 1861, p.572.

¹¹² Eliot and Sutherland, p.8.

Typically, the first entries in *The Bookseller* covered business news such as changes of legal status and the names of arriving or departing partners, and details of relocations and changes of addresses. The accuracy of the information was vital so the people with legal or financial responsibilities could be identified and assessments of their propriety and financial credibility made by any potential investors or partners. In case any readers underestimated or doubted the importance of these details, Whitaker cited a report of a lawsuit whose outcome relied on the evidence of the date of the change of name and ownership of a firm that had been printed in *The Bookseller*. He reminded them that this seemingly trivial information could be 'of the utmost value', and that 'the fact of the change in the name of the firm having been notified in *The Bookseller* had considerable weight in deciding the issue'. ¹¹³

The rest of the trade news section covered a wide variety of topics and might include: sales figures of a notable recent title; news of a new magazine; details of changes in regulations for business services supplied by the Post Office or railways. A sample issue from March 1875 reported on, amongst other things, a plea that magazine publishers remember to issue their publications a little earlier than usual to accommodate Easter; details of a new type-composing machine that was trialled by *The Times*; notification of a theatrical periodical, *The Stage of Dublin*, with its 'guaranteed weekly circulation of 10,000 copies'; news of the American book trade from their 'correspondent at Philadelphia'; changes in the departure times of the newspaper trains between King's Cross and Liverpool and Manchester; the reproduced text of a Bill before the House of Commons for a proposed international copyright agreement; and a meeting of 'a few third and fourth rate litterateurs and adapters' to attempt to form an 'Authors' Protection Society'.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ BKS, March 1863, p.146. Names of those involved in the lawsuit were not given.

¹¹⁴ BKS, March 1875, pp.216-20.

News also came from further afield; stories from the expanding British Empire chronicled concerns that were specific to the location and requirements of local booksellers. Readers learned from an Australian bookseller that uncut books were preferred to those whose pages had been opened as they could guarantee their customers that the books were still in their original bindings. Canada, a British Dominion, was also a regular topic. Its proximity to the United States in the continued absence of international copyright agreements between Britain and the United States tempted some traders to smuggle books over the border to avoid the tariffs. 116

The trade in foreign language books was small but the Continent was an important market for English language books as well as a source of imported books. Some of the bookselling strategies developed there were reported with admiration. The impressive 'enterprising energy of foreign publishers' underpinned the story of a young Belgian publisher who had staked his entire fortune of 300,000 francs, about £12,000, on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* after reading a partial manuscript. Other more established publishers had refused to pay the exorbitant sum demanded by Hugo, but he had been impressed by the 'liberality' with which the youthful M. Lacroix promised to promote the work. Extravagant banquets were organised filled with celebrities and lavish souvenirs, resulting in the book becoming the bestselling title on the Continent of the 1850s. The implication was that British publishers could learn much from their European counterparts.

Closer to home, Ireland was seen as a difficult market for books. This was attributed to an insufficient number of booksellers; many sizeable towns had none, and 6 of the 32 counties had no booksellers or circulating libraries at all. Later reporting concluded that

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¹¹⁵ BKS, June 1858, p.242; December 1875, p.1170.

¹¹⁶ BKS, March 1869, p.219. This topic is examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.

¹¹⁷ BKS, October 1863, p.603.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ BKS, June 1858, p.351; February 1859, p.726.

much of the blame should be attributed to the resistance of the Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy to the education of the population. Publishing and bookselling in Scotland, described as 'our northern friends', was judged to be flourishing; Scotland had a third of the population of Ireland but three times the number of booksellers. Scottish publishers were powerful forces in the London trade, with a number of the larger firms operating from offices in both London and Scotland such as William and Robert Chambers, William Collins, and Williams and Norgate. Although not acknowledged in *The Bookseller*, Whitaker had some personal interest in the Scottish trade as two of his daughters, Elizabeth and Edith, later married Scottish publishers, James Wilson Johnson of W. and A.K. Johnson and John Cumming Nimmo respectively.

Each month a few titles were selected for brief mentions in a section dedicated to book news. The featured books were not necessarily the best-known or most famous titles but perhaps those that were timely or had a specific readership in mind that had already proved popular. A recently published cheap edition of Dr Norman Macleod's *Deborah*; *or Christian Principles for Domestic Servants*, published by Thomas Constable & Co. in 1859, was recommended for every female servant and her mistress in the country to help them understand the requirements and qualifications of a dutiful servant. Also recommended was the publication of the fourth edition by Alfred Bennett in 1859 of *The Search for a Publisher, or Counsels to Young Authors*, judged to be of great use to authors and that might save them a 'considerable sum' when dealing with publishers -- who it was acknowledged were likely to disagree with much of the advice. Occasionally, sales figures were quoted.

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¹²⁰ BKS, October 1859, p.1274.

¹²¹ *BKS*, June 1858, p.351.

¹²² BKS, January 1859, p.679; p.680; p.710.

¹²³ *BKS*, November 1859, p.1327.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

only a few months, a figure that included prestigious sales to each of the royal libraries. Also noted was the impressive print order of 25,000 copies for Harriet Beecher Stowe's new work *The Minister's Wooing*, an indication that the author's reputation still benefitted from the phenomenal success of her earlier work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. ¹²⁵

Publishers' catalogues were noted, including those of a specialist nature such as Barritt & Co's *Trade Catalogue of Bibles*, John Hearne's catalogue for numismatic works for coin collectors, and Samuel Maynard's catalogue for books on mathematics. ¹²⁶ At the other end of the scale, Dean & Sons' *Trade Catalogue* was included for its wide-ranging usefulness for retailers: 'so multifarious are their contents that we can only describe it by saying that it contains almost everything that a country bookseller and stationer desirous of doing a profitable trade can require'. ¹²⁷

To a trade readership, this news and gossip was meaningful and valuable. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'gossip' as 'trifling or groundless rumour; tittle-tattle' but according to sociologists and business historians the exchange and circulation of this 'trifling' information was an egalitarian act and of great value to a business community. ¹²⁸ In organisation studies, gossip is defined as 'the process of informally communicating value-laden information, helping to bind individuals together, playing 'a vital role in group formation, regulation and perpetuation.' ¹²⁹ As sociologists Mike Noon and Rick Delbridge conclude, gossip is a 'function of social relations'. ¹³⁰ Where publishers had previously jealously guarded their business contacts and commercial intelligence for their own advantage, *The Bookseller* made it available for anyone willing to pay for it. In a commercial

¹²⁵ BKS, October 1859, p.1273.

¹²⁶ BKS, May 1859, p.925.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Mike Noon and Rick Delbridge, 'News From Behind My Hand: Gossip in Organizations', *Organization Studies*, 14, 1 (1993), 23-36.

¹²⁹ Noon and Delbridge, p.32.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

context, exposure to a variety of viewpoints led to a lowering of risk, the extension of a common trade language, and openness to new ideas and fresh perspectives that encouraged dynamism in a business culture.¹³¹

Exchanging and sharing gossip spread knowledge beyond just those with privileged and vested interests. It was in this section that ordinary booksellers, small and provincial publishers, and even lowly assistants could contribute to discussions and debates on trade issues and have their views represented in a national forum. As suggested by Granovetter's theory of 'weak ties', access to information from beyond individual traders' own personal or professional networks had significant advantages for a trading community, such as access to guidance about the challenges and hazards of bookselling leading to a greater understanding of the market for books, and the opportunity for trust to develop between traders through familiarity with each other. The exchange of gossip not only shared information and created ties within a group, it also helped to maintain and reinforce community values by encouraging a sense of inclusivity.

Whitaker understood that gossip played an important part in the construction of the book trade's collective history by capturing what were later seen as decisive moments:

The monthly 'Gossip' of *The Bookseller*, trifling as it appears, yet records acts which to the person interested are the turning points of their lives – the tide which some catch at the very flood, and are thus borne on to fortune. ¹³³

By recording, organising, and disseminating a respectable version of the past, the information preserved in *The Bookseller* became a reservoir of trade folklore, the record of a common heritage. These details contributed stories and viewpoints to the collective consciousness and, in effect, became the first draft of an institutional history, albeit an incomplete and even contradictory one. ¹³⁴ For the book trade, access to this community

¹³¹ Casson, *Information and Organisation*, pp.276-77.

¹³² Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties' and 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited'.

¹³³ BKS, August 1865, p.525.

¹³⁴ Noon and Delbridge, p.27.

gossip and the sense of inclusion it promised was restricted only by the willingness or ability to pay the price of a subscription.

Book lists

Until 1802 and the launch of *Bent's*, booksellers searched publishers' catalogues and trade lists for bibliographic information about their new books. Publishers and wholesalers controlled their trade contacts to maintain a competitive advantage and to restrict access of new books to booksellers over which they had some control, dispensing the essential information to favoured booksellers in a variety of trade and publisher catalogues, or by exchanging news at invitation-only trade sales. Country booksellers had to rely on visits by a variety of publishers' travellers who journeyed around the country with lists and sample texts. Certain books that publishers thought would have a wide sale were promoted in *Bent's* and *The Publishers' Circular* in advertisements and book lists. Whitaker saw a need for more comprehensive and better organised book lists and created three kinds, each with a slightly different purpose.

The lists were arranged under the headings 'Publications of the Month', 'Notices of Books', and 'Alphabetical List of the Principal English and American Publications' at the end of each issue. Until 1870 *The Publishers' Circular* only listed new books alphabetically with no other classified breakdowns. ¹³⁶ Whitaker understood that multiple lists were necessary so booksellers could quickly and easily find a particular title or the range of titles available on a given subject, so that 'persons interested in publications of one description, may at a glance see what works on that subject have been published'. ¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Introduction, *Hodson's Directory*, p.vi and p.viii.

¹³⁶ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.43.

¹³⁷ BKS, May 1858 p.194.

Books listed under 'Publications of the Month' were classified by subject and then listed in alphabetical order by title. The entries provided bibliographic details to ensure that the correct edition of a book could be identified. This included the long form of the title, author and publisher name, edition number, size and format, page extent, and place of publication. The publisher's retail price was also listed, but for books that were offered in more than one size or binding, the price listed was for ordinary cloth binding described as 'for cloth lettered, unless otherwise expressed'. At the end of each year, the monthly lists were compiled into the 'Annual Catalogue' and published in a separate volume. Priced at 3/6, it claimed to be 'the most complete annual catalogue ever issued'. A seasonal list, 'Prospects of the Season', was usually published in the October issue and highlighted the most important books, classified by topic, of the autumn publishing season.

The categories of classification in these lists appeared in alphabetical order. Regular categories included some of the following headings:

- Annuals and Serials
- Art and Archaeology
- Atlases and Geography
- Biography and History
- Children's Books and Juvenile Fiction
- Fiction
- Law and Parliamentary
- Mathematics
- Religious
- Poetry and General Literature
- Science and Botany
- Serials and Miscellany

There were also sections of books in foreign languages, particularly French, Italian and German, and for official publications such as Parliamentary papers and Government 'Blue Books'. This taxonomy had some built-in flexibility and was changed or merged from time to time to accommodate shifts in the popularity of certain genres. For instance, books of a

¹³⁸ BKS, June 1867, p.444.

¹³⁹ BKS, April 1861, p.212.

geographical nature were usually listed under 'Geography and Atlases' but on occasion were instead listed as 'Geography, Topography &c', and children's books were sometimes listed together with lesser novels as 'Minor Fiction and Juvenile Works'. ¹⁴⁰ Temporary or qualified classifications were also employed for commemorations or particular moments in time, such as 'The Indian Question, Politics etc' following the 1857 Indian mutiny, or seasonal categories such as 'Illustrated Books of the Season'. ¹⁴¹ Occasionally a category heading also displayed the unvarnished opinion of the editor regarding a particular title: George Harris' *Supernatural Phenomena: Tests adapted to Determine the Truth of Supernatural Phenomena* was listed alone under the heading 'Charlatanism'. ¹⁴²

The classifications were not intended as literary judgements but rare instances did lead to complaints. The publishers Ward, Lock and Tyler protested about the designation of a series of books they had published on commission categorised by *The Bookseller* as 'Newgate Calendar Literature' and described as being 'of a highly sensational kind' much like stories of the thief Jack Sheppard and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Paul Clifford*. In a dismissive response, Whitaker merely stated that 'it was hardly necessary to say that no reply had been sent'; the classifications were for the benefit of the booksellers, not the publishers.

The second regular list, 'Notices of Books', consisted of previews of new books submitted by publishers for inspection. The short title, author and publisher names, and sometimes the size and format were noted but not the price. Books were selected from a range of works of history, literature, travel, reference, religion, and fiction. A sample from the March 1875 issue included works of literature, religion and history such as *The Works of*

¹⁴⁰ BKS, May 1867, pp.369-70.

¹⁴¹ BKS, January 1859, p.665.

¹⁴² BKS, April 1874, p.309.

¹⁴³ BKS, December 1865, p.783. Paul Clifford was the story of a chivalrous highwayman remembered for its opening phrase, 'It was a dark and stormy night...'

¹⁴⁴ BKS, December 1865, p.783.

Thomas Love Peacock, Days Near Rome by Augustus J. C. Hare, and The History of Japan by Francis Ottwell Adams, as well as new collections of hymns, a directory of the commercial companies of the City of London and Debrett's Peerage and Titles of Courtesy. Some notices could be a column or more long and include considerable descriptive detail, but most were short but 'at sufficient length to convey a very accurate opinion regarding the contents and merits, or assumed merits, of the works noticed'. They were intended to evaluate the book's content and its commercial potential:

It has always been our aim rather to tell our readers what a book contains than what we personally think of it; and that, we take it, is the true end of the reviewer and the review. It is easy to generalise to talk of a story as interesting, well-written, amusing, exciting, and so forth; but though it is not always fair to an author to dissect his plot and give a précis of his arguments, it is certain that an honest analysis is in the main more useful to author, publishers, and reader than any quantity of padding.¹⁴⁷

These previews were descriptions to help booksellers and libraries assess the likely appeal of each title in their market. They were not critical judgements such as those in the literary quarterlies, and they were not merely publishers' 'puffs', the thinly-disguised promotional pieces provided by the publishers themselves. *The Bookseller* considered puffing a 'mala fide practice' and denounced publishers who used them. ¹⁴⁸ The practice was blamed, perhaps unfairly, on the Americans and British publishers who imported American books, and readers were reminded that the respectable 'great houses' did not indulge in such behaviour. ¹⁴⁹ *The Bookseller* policy for the Notices stated that they were to be strictly impartial:

The rule we would like to see laid down is that, what appears as editorial should be strictly such, and what is advertisement should be

¹⁴⁵ BKS, March 1875, pp.22-29.

¹⁴⁶ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

¹⁴⁷ BKS, May 1877, pp.407-08.

¹⁴⁸ *BKS*, May 1864, p.310. Puffing remained a persistent problem and a later comment in May 1880, p.436 advised that similar attempts at 'free advertising' should be 'committed to the waste-paper basket'. ¹⁴⁹ *BKS*, May 1864, p.311.

marked as such; the public could then readily distinguish between the two. 150

Notices were written by unnamed literary experts, 'several gentlemen of literary reputation whose connection with the work will add much to the weight of the opinions expressed', and, to guarantee neutrality, they were remunerated by *The Bookseller*, not the publisher. The reviewer considered the merits of the work, and whether it was successful in its own terms. For example, Susan Morley's *Throstlethwaite: A Novel* was described as 'a prettily-told domestic story' and 'a charming story'; *Clevedon* by Stephen Yorke, was 'a bright and healthy story, pleasantly and naturally written'. The selected titles were chosen from a wide range of genres, not only fiction and juvenile works but also works of translation and the classics, and religious and educational titles. The descriptions and evaluations enabled the booksellers to select inventory by quickly sifting through the torrent of new books. They also equipped booksellers with enough detail to enable them to discuss or recommend the books without having to read each one:

These notices are to a great extent written for the purpose of conveying information to such persons in the trade as may not have the opportunity of reading the books for themselves, but who may be called upon to give an opinion, or description of the works, to their customers.¹⁵³

Many of the previewed books are long forgotten and may not have survived on library shelves, but they are important because they represent the books that *The Bookseller* thought were worth highlighting each month, implying that they were the titles with commercial appeal if not necessarily much literary credibility.

The third book list, the 'Alphabetical List', was printed at the end of each issue and comprised 'the principal English Publications' for the month. Organised by author's surname, it was a handy list of each book's short title, the edition, format and size, plus the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

¹⁵² BKS, January 1876, p.8.

¹⁵³ BKS, March 1858, p.98.

publisher's name and retail price. At the beginning of each year the previous year's details were collated and printed as a cumulative list, preserving what *The Bookseller* claimed to be the most comprehensive record of the annual production of books then available. This claim, however, was disputed. *The Publishers' Circular* promised on the front page of each issue that it contained 'a complete alphabetical list of all new works published in Great Britain'. Furthermore, the introduction to the thousandth issue in May 1879 claimed that 'a complete record of the full title, size, pages and price of, as nearly as may be, every book published in Great Britain during the whole of the lengthened period of [the journal's] existence' had been recorded in its pages. This was not true.

	Bent's	The Publishers' Circular	The Bookseller
1858	3704	4256	5186
1859	3499	4258	5490
1860	N/A	4564	5565
1865	N/A	4426	4343
1875	N/A	4903	5997
1885	N/A	5640	6955
1895	N/A	6516	8989

Table 7 Total number of titles listed per annum¹⁵⁵

Table 7 represents the total numbers of titles listed in the three main trade publications in a series of sample years between 1850 and 1894 compiled from Eliot's study. ¹⁵⁶ Other than in 1865, *The Bookseller* consistently listed more titles than *The Publishers' Circular*. ¹⁵⁷ By providing a more comprehensive range of titles from a wider selection of publishers, *The*

¹⁵⁴ PC, 15 May 1879, p.362.

¹⁵⁵ Eliot, Some Patterns, pp.121-24.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Bookseller's book lists were more useful to its trade readers and more representative of book production in the mid- and late-Victorian period.

Advertising: 'the life and soul of the business'

The advertising section was by far the largest in the journal. As a former bookseller, Whitaker appreciated the centrality of advertising to the book trade, stating that it was 'the very life and soul of the business, the means of increasing it and keeping it together'.

158 It was also an essential component of the journal and a core element of its financial stability.

Taken together, the advertising sections not only form a rich resource of literary history preserving details of books and editions that would otherwise be long forgotten but they also contain evidence of the marketing strategies publishers used to gain the attention of distributors, retailers, and, ultimately, customers for their new books.

As noted earlier, books were thought to be one of the first commercial products to use advertising for promotional purposes; Roman booksellers used placards outside their shops to advertise their manuscripts, and William Caxton was believed to be the first English merchant to use posters to advertise his books. ¹⁵⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century it was the primary method of marketing books, with advertisements printed in newspapers and periodicals, inserted as endpapers of books, and used as wrappers for periodicals. ¹⁶⁰ Publisher John Chapman explained the trade's reliance on the practice:

The system of publishing in England involves a larger expenditure for advertising than is incurred in any other country; because here publishers depend more exclusively than elsewhere upon advertisements for making their works known to the public [...and] almost the only way in which readers become aware of the existence of new English books is by means of advertisements.¹⁶¹

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¹⁵⁸ BKS, Dec 1863, p.932.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Sampson, *A History of Advertising From the Earliest Times* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1874), p.42; Samuel Squire Sprigge, *The Methods of Publishing*, (London: Henry Glaisher, 1890), p.83.

¹⁶⁰ McKitterick, 'Introduction', p.60.

¹⁶¹ Chapman, pp.6-7.

In the German trade, by contrast, advertising was little used as booksellers were sent regular notices about new books by the Borsenverein and the market could be tested locally by ordering new titles speculatively from publishers and returning them later if unsold for a full reimbursement. 162

Advertising may have been essential but, as Chapman noted, it was not cheap. The abolition of the 1/6 tax on advertisements in 1853 may have reduced the cost of advertising but it remained a considerable expense for publishers. This was especially true for the titles that required repeated and regular advertising in several publications such as schoolbooks, textbooks and manuals. Chapman calculated that a publisher should expect to spend at least 25% of the production costs of a new book on advertising. Richard Bentley and Colburn and Co. were rumoured to spend £5000 annually on advertising, and Longmans even more. 164

Despite the expense, Whitaker managed to convince more publishers to use his journal than *The Publishers' Circular* by offering more space and more generous terms.

Table 8 below, based on sample years, reveals the numbers of publishers who were listed on the advertising index. The figures show that each issue of *The Bookseller* in the sample year attracted advertising from between 47% and 291% more publishers than *The Publishers'*Circular. The table does not differentiate between those publishers that took out several pages of advertising containing a large number of titles and those that only needed a small insert for a single title, but a far wider range of publishers evidently concluded that *The Bookseller* was the most effective medium for advertising to the trade.

¹⁶² Joseph Shaylor, *Sixty Years a Bookman with Other Recollections and Reflections* (London: Selwyn and Blount, 1923), pp.158-59.

¹⁶³ Chapman, p.10.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.7.

	The Publishers' Circular	The Bookseller	+/- %
January 1858+	33	129	+291%
January 1859	45	166	+269%
January 1860	60	88	+47%
January 1865	52	114	+119%
January 1875	55	105	+91%
January 1885+	78	117	+50%
January 1895	39	105	+169%

Table 8 Totals of publishers listed as advertising in each publication in the first January issue of the given year

+ taken from the second issue in January of *The Publishers' Circular*

With additional space, publishers could routinely present a wider range of their current titles each month. For instance, in January 1875 Chatto & Windus took out two and a half pages in *The Bookseller* to advertise their current titles, totalling 32 titles by various authors, plus an announcement that they had taken over Henry Bohn's list of books. ¹⁶⁵ In the same month in *The Publishers' Circular*, their advertisement used only one page to report the Bohn news and list just 14 titles of a single author, Wilkie Collins. ¹⁶⁶ Increasingly, *The Bookseller* circulated information about a broader range of books and endeavoured to serve a more diverse range of booksellers while *The Publishers' Circular* addressed the more traditional or prestigious end of the market.

Ten years after launching, Whitaker later claimed that *The Bookseller* was so successful that it circulated to 'a thousand millions of people amongst whom at least eighty millions read or speak the English language'. ¹⁶⁷ This uncharacteristically immodest claim was made with no supporting evidence but was designed to assure advertisers of the global

¹⁶⁵ BKS, January 1875, pp.38-39.

¹⁶⁶ PC, 18 January 1875, p.21.

¹⁶⁷ BKS, April 1869, p.298.

reach of the publication. International readers were enticed by advantageous subscription rates; subscribers in France, North America, Australia and 'most of the Colonies' were offered the same rate as domestic readers of 5s post free. Subscribers in Germany, Holland, India, and 'some other countries' were charged a slightly higher rate of 6s. 169

Once convinced of the efficacy of *The Bookseller*, publishers were instructed to submit their advertisements before the print deadline, which was set just three days before publication day to enable them to include the latest information.¹⁷⁰ The number of advertisers fluctuated over the course of the year, but the section usually took up approximately 75% of each issue.¹⁷¹ Occasionally, the ratio could drop to 50% in the quieter summer months, and then rise to 95% of the total in the latter part of the year in anticipation of the Christmas gift-giving season.

Advertisements were placed in the trade press to introduce new titles to retail booksellers and to bulk buyers such as wholesalers and the main circulating libraries, Mudie's and W. H. Smith's. 172 They were also placed in the literary press such as *The Athenaeum*. Firms like Macmillan with extensive lists of new books were able to select different titles for each publication and adjust the details to reflect the requirements and interests of the different readerships. For instance, in April 1875 Macmillan's advertisement for the trade press contained a full page of only the essential bibliographic information while the one prepared for *The Athenaeum* included quotes and text designed to persuade readers of the merits of some of the books.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ BKS, January 1858, p.2.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix 2. for tables of sample years 1859 and 1876. The names of the participating publishers were listed on the front page of each issue.

¹⁷² W. H. Smith added subscription libraries to its network of railway bookstalls in 1860, see Charles Wilson, *First with the News: The History of W. H. Smith 1792-1972*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p.355.

The design of the advertisements was typographically unadventurous, with only the bibliographic information included. Advertising was charged by size, so those placed in the smallest and cheapest spaces, and containing only the essential details of author, title, format and size, binding and retail price, along with the publisher's address, as in Fig. 12, indicated a publishers' limited budget or a presumption of modest sales:

On 26th inst., will be published,

MANUAL OF MODERN GEOGRAPHY, Mathematical, Physical, and Political,
on a new Plan, embracing a Complete Development
of the River Systems of the Globe. By the Rev.
ALEXANDER MACKAY, F.R.G.S. Fcap. 8vo, pp. 712.
WM. BLACKWOOD & SONS, Edinburgh and London.

Fig.12 Advertisement for Blackwood and Sons¹⁷³

Slightly larger entries that incorporated more contextual information indicated higher hopes. Emphasis on the credentials of the author, references to previous titles, quotations from positive reviews printed in other publications, and the book's success in previous editions suggested that the book had already been well-received, as shown in Fig. 13 below:

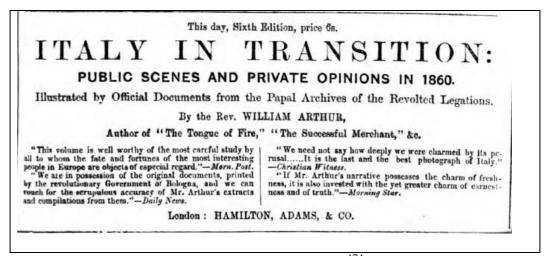


Fig.13 Advertisement for Hamilton, Adams & Co¹⁷⁴

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¹⁷³ BKS, January 1861, p.60.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.37.

When publishers believed there would be strong demand and special treatment from booksellers might be required, the advertisements included sample text and particulars about the title's visual and tactile attributes.

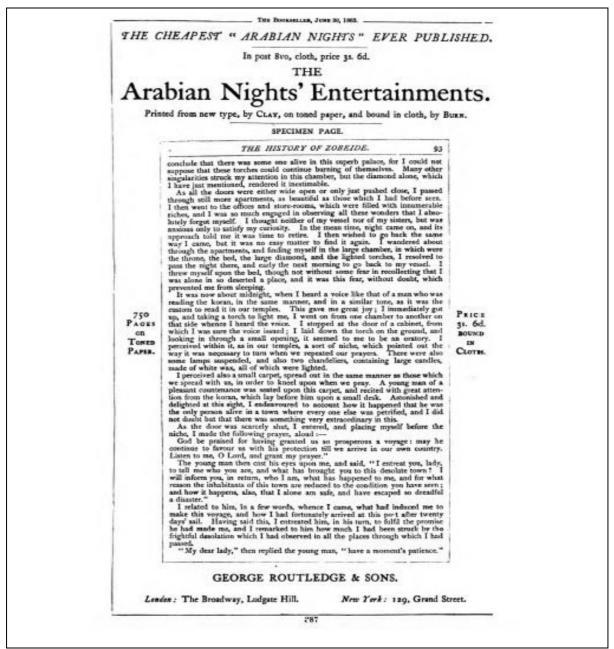


Fig.14 Advertisement for *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* ¹⁷⁵

For the example in Fig. 14 for the new edition of the *Arabian Nights*, 'cheapest *Arabian Nights* ever published', Routledge emphasized the use of high-quality materials and

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¹⁷⁵ BKS, June 1865, p.387.

production methods despite its relatively modest cost. Featuring a specimen page of text, the advertisement stated that the edition would be priced at 3s 6d, printed on superior 'toned paper' by printer Richard Clay, set with new type for a crisper impression, and bound by the binder James Burn. Experienced booksellers would recognise the names of the printer and the binder and conclude that even though the price of the book was moderate, the quality would be reassuringly high for a book intended as a gift.

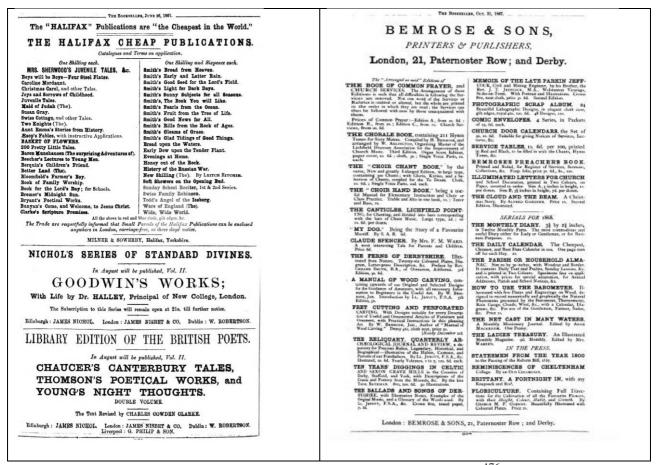


Fig.15 Examples of advertisements from provincial publishers 1860s¹⁷⁶

The relatively low cost of advertising in *The Bookseller* also had benefits for smaller or regional publishers, as illustrated in Fig. 15 by Bemrose of Derby and Milner and Sowerby of

¹⁷⁶ BKS, June 1861, p.368; October 1867, p.827.

Halifax, who were able to present their books to a national and international market alongside the larger publishers.¹⁷⁷

What design creativity there was in *The Bookseller* was reserved for products where there was the likelihood of repeat sales. These more decorative advertisements were placed in the last few pages of the section devoted to a variety of goods and services including paper and other non-book items, such as playing cards and stationery, account books and envelopes, perfumed sachets and woven bookmarkers, and seasonal items such as calendars and Christmas cards, as shown in the examples in Fig.16.



Fig.16 Advertisement for stationery items¹⁷⁸

Larger items such as patent boxes and cabinets for storing papers were also offered, along with printers' inks, guillotines, and printing presses. This section also contained advertisements for a variety of services offered to publishers and booksellers by businesses

¹⁷⁷ The 'Halifax Cheap Editions' were not advertised in *Publishers' Circular* in 1861. Bemrose also had a London branch.

¹⁷⁸ BKS, November 1878, p.1176 and p.1181.

allied to bookmaking, such as book binding, type-founding, engraving and lithography, and firms that packed and transported books to the export markets, completing the range of advertising services available to booksellers.

Supplements and special numbers

Following the example of *The Publishers' Circular*, Whitaker produced several kinds of thematic supplements and special seasonal numbers that followed the publishing year. From 1860, 'Books of the Quarter' consisted of a compilation of 'all the chief books' published in the previous quarter with short descriptions of each title and was produced 'for the purpose of being issued by the trade amongst their customers'. The special issues cost 10/6 per hundred. In addition, booksellers were offered the opportunity to enhance their value by having their address and trade signs printed on the front cover to enable them to be circulated locally 'as their own publication'. 180 The other supplements were produced for the education, travel, and gift markets, and the timing of their publication followed the rhythms of the publishing year.

Publishers produced and advertised educational books throughout the year but twice a year, usually in January and July, *The Bookseller* produced special issues to provide a showcase for new educational titles as well as to remind booksellers of standard texts and series. The journal's view of education, articulated in 1868 just before the passing of the 1870 Education Act, was that it was now universally considered to be a good thing, 'a state necessity', and that every child had a right to an education. ¹⁸¹ The schools that provided the education had to be 'strictly secular' with any religious teaching to be undertaken at Sunday

¹⁷⁹ BKS, April 1860, p.212.

¹⁸¹ *BKS*, February 1868, p.3.

Schools. 182 For booksellers the expansion of education had dual benefits as it was both an ethical obligation and a business opportunity:

The extension of education is, perhaps, more than any other subject of the day a bookseller's question, as, apart from higher motives, it appeals to their self-interest. More readers will cause a larger demand for books to read, and it is therefore the bounden duty of every bookseller to promote the education of the people. 183

Demand for educational books had grown since the 1830s. Even before compulsory elementary schooling was introduced in 1870, a mass-market for cheap textbooks and primers had developed to support the growing numbers of children and adults able to access education at all levels in a variety of institutional and informal settings. Some children learned informally from parents or other adults, as well as in ragged schools, dame schools, grammar schools, and at technical secondary schools. ¹⁸⁴ Church-based Sunday schools also provided weekly lessons for a million children. ¹⁸⁵ In the 1840s, private schools such as Cheltenham, Marlborough, and Radley were established to satisfy the demand from the aristocracy and emerging middle classes for formal schooling. ¹⁸⁶ By 1851, 30,000 private day schools in England and Wales educated 700,000 children, about a third of the population, offering teaching in 'the three Rs'. ¹⁸⁷

Adult education was supported by a network of mechanics' institutes and their libraries; by 1850 there were 702 institutes across the country. University education for Anglicans broadened beyond the ancient institutions with King's College London (1829) and Durham University (1832). Non-conformists were eventually granted the opportunity for higher education and admitted to London University, now UCL, in 1826. Beyond educational

¹⁸² BKS, February 1868, pp.3-4.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁸⁴ Altick, p.167 and 187.

¹⁸⁵ Gillian Sutherland, 'Education', *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 Volume 3*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.119-170, (p.126).

¹⁸⁶ Sutherland, 'Education', p.136.

¹⁸⁷ Altick, p.147.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.190.

institutions, an increasing professionalism and a desire for status and recognition as well as distance from the merchant, trading, and labouring classes encouraged professional associations to form. Civil servants, as well as practitioners of law, medicine, accountancy and insurance, were encouraged to study for qualifications, fuelling demand for specialised textbooks, manuals and practice papers.¹⁸⁹

The book trade responded to this increased appetite for reading and studying by producing a variety of textbooks, grammars, primers, and other educational texts and materials. *The Bookseller* praised the publishers' efforts to support, and even in some cases anticipate, the needs of students and the pedagogical requirements of teachers. Echoing Henry Brougham's aspirations for a well-educated society, the results were applauded:

the schoolmaster has since been abroad and following hard upon his track the booksellers and publishers have diligently worked, supplying every want that can be imagined, and, in not a few instances being actually in advance of the schoolmaster. ¹⁹⁰

The Bookseller's educational numbers displayed a wide range of books and educational products for booksellers to recommend and supply to their customers. Extra copies of the special issues were printed to be sent by booksellers to schools in the neighbourhood for a charge of 2/6 per dozen.¹⁹¹ Later, additional copies were also offered to 'principals of schools and colleges, and other persons interested in the work of education' such as 'gentlemen engaged in tuition' who were offered the supplement free of charge.¹⁹²

Advertisements displayed lists of schoolbooks, primers, classic translations and dictionaries, works on mathematics, texts to assist the teaching and learning of foreign

¹⁹¹ BKS, July 1859, p.1070.

¹⁸⁹ G Millerson, *The Qualifying Associations: A Study in Professionalisation*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p.4, defines the essential features of a profession as a skill based on theoretical knowledge, it requires training and education, competence is tested by passing a test, integrity is maintained by adherence to a code of conduct, the service is for the public good rather than merely for profit, and the profession is organized. See also K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-86* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.40-45.

¹⁹⁰ BKS, July 1865, p.427.

¹⁹² BKS, July 1865, p.427.

languages, copy books and dictionaries, as well as books on geography, atlases and maps. For schools whose curriculum stretched beyond the three 'Rs', books for singing and music lessons, and drawing and art were marketed as shown in Fig. 17.

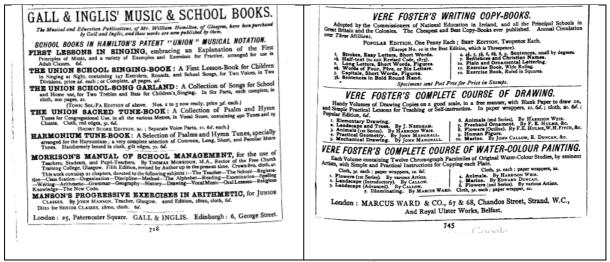


Fig.17 Advertisements for music and drawing books 193

Businesses which dealt in non-book supplies as well as books also advertised school desks, globes and gymnastic apparatus. These products were aimed at the same markets as educational texts, and publishers such as Thomas Laurie of Edinburgh used the opportunity to present their goods, claiming their products had been adopted by 'numerous School Boards and Teachers Home and Abroad'. 194

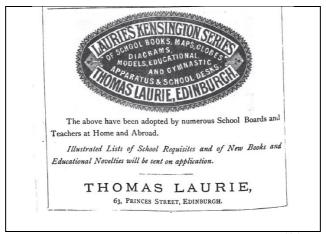


Fig.18 Advertisement for school supplies¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ BKS, August 1876, p.718 and p.745.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.716.

¹⁹⁵ BKS, August 1876, p.716.

For *The Bookseller*, education was an important stimulus for bookselling and was regularly emphasized outside the supplements in the main journal; in 1872, the new publishing season was introduced with the declaration that 'the most hopeful thing for the trade is the prospect of an universal spread of education' in which booksellers had an important role. ¹⁹⁶ Not only were they responsible for supplying schools and colleges, they were also responsible for helping the working classes develop good reading habits by 'guiding their literary purchases'. ¹⁹⁷

As the school year ended and the weather improved in the early summer, the advertisements in *The Bookseller* featured travel literature and guidebooks to notify booksellers of the latest works. ¹⁹⁸ The gradual rise in living standards and the shortening of the working week had created some leisure time for all but the poorest sections of society, and travel became a popular leisure activity. ¹⁹⁹ Guidebooks had emerged as a sub-genre of travel literature in the mid-1830s with works such as John Murray's *A hand-book for travellers on the continent: being a guide through Holland, Belgium, Prussia and northern Germany and along the Rhine from Holland to Switzerland* published in 1836. ²⁰⁰ From the 1860s, *The Bookseller* advertised a wide selection of books, guides, and maps for all kinds of travellers, with lists appearing in June and July from publishers such as Baedeker, Thomas Letts, A.& C. Black, and George Phillip. ²⁰¹ These books were not only maps and guide books but also language guides. As summer progressed, booksellers were directed to books for the domestic market with titles such as *Common Shells* and *Common Seaweeds* from Frederick Warne's New Seaside Books series, 'compiled with an earnest wish to the mass of seaside visitors and their children', and Macmillan & Co.'s *The Scenery of Scotland, in Connexion*

¹⁹⁶ BKS, October 1872, p.797.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.797.

¹⁹⁸ BKS, June 1865, p.383.

¹⁹⁹ Victoria Cooper and Dave Russell, 'Publishing for Leisure', *CHBB6*, pp.475-499, (p.475).

²⁰⁰ Cooper and Russell, p.491.

²⁰¹ BKS, May 1865, p.329; June 1865 p.384.

with its Physical Geography, which was tagged as a 'new book for tourists'. ²⁰² Later, books were marketed as being 'for holiday reading' such as *Holiday Rambles in Ordinary Places* and *A Search for Fortune: The Autobiography of a Younger Son; A Narrative of Travel and Adventure* from Daldy, Ibster & Co. ²⁰³

Once the summer demand waned, booksellers' attentions turned to the start of the new publishing season in the months before Christmas. The period between October and December became increasingly commercially important to publishers in the 1830s and 1840s, with the greatest volume of new books published in late November and early December. Like *The Publishers' Circular*, *The Bookseller* produced a special supplement for Christmas as a service to booksellers that gave them easy access to an illustrated and annotated guide of the books most likely to be in demand as seasonal gifts.

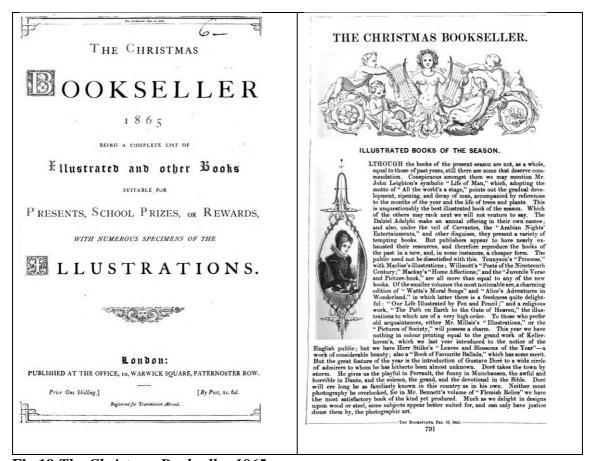


Fig.19 The Christmas Bookseller 1865

²⁰² BKS, July 1865, p.495; August 1865, p.552.

²⁰³ BKS, July 1878, p.617 and p.635.

²⁰⁴ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, pp.32-35 and p.42.

The Christmas Bookseller was a compendium of announcements of the finest books to be given as gifts and prizes at Christmas and throughout the year, many of them illustrated. It was designed to be shared with customers, printed 'in an attractive form, so that it will serve the trade for circulation amongst their customers'. The usual trade news and notices of new books were replaced by long reviews of selected titles along with sample illustrations and text. Initially produced as part of the December issue, the volume of advertisements grew so much after 1863 that it was published as a standalone issue. By the late 1870s, the special issue was lavishly produced and described itself as a 'cornucopia [..] filled to overflowing with the fruits of the season'. 206

The supplement was an expensive undertaking. Each copy cost two shillings to produce but it was sold at a trade price to encourage booksellers to buy multiple copies.²⁰⁷ The additional copies could be personalised with the bookseller's name and priced at the special rate of 100 copies for 50s, 50 copies for 30s, or 25 copies for 17/6, and limited to 100 copies per order.²⁰⁸ Members of the public with literary interests could also buy these copies at the higher price of 1s or 1/6 post free. Whitaker intended that *The Christmas Bookseller* be used as a guide for gift books year-round and that it should appeal to book-buyers as well as booksellers.²⁰⁹ The high production values would help to broaden its appeal:

It will also contain some literary features of interest, besides numerous Illustrated Advertisements printed on toned paper, which will in various ways render it attractive to book-buyers, but more especially as a guide to the purchaser of books for presents, not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.²¹⁰

Any publishers who doubted the value of the Christmas issue and the benefit of inclusion were assured that the supplement would find 'its way into the drawing rooms of wealthy

²⁰⁵ BKS, October 1858, p.430.

²⁰⁶ Christmas Bookseller, 1877, p.1.

²⁰⁷ BKS, October 1865, p.648.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

book-buyers in all part of the world' and that no other 'illustrated volume [was] more carefully examined by those who are seeking to purchase books'.²¹¹ Extracts from a positive review in *Home News*, a paper edited by 'one of the best-informed literary men of the day', was offered as further evidence of its suitability:

In the midst of this winter-wealth of seasonable books, commend us for a golden key to our golden treasures to *The Bookseller*, which furnishes the magic 'open sesame' to all our publications... We know of no independent publication which from its size, subjects, or the beauty of its typography and general arrangement is more worthy of a place on the drawing room table. All readers, to say nothing about purchasers to whom it is indispensable, should possess *The Bookseller*.²¹²

Further assurance was given that 'in no case has commendation been bestowed on an unworthy book' and only the best books of the year were highlighted, arranged by topic or author for easy reference. Some of the recommendations were for single titles or even a single illustrator, and they could be very long. The work of the then little-known Gustave Dore appeared in several titles in 1865 and was highly praised in a review that spanned seven pages and included four whole-page illustrations from the various books. Other books were grouped under headings such as 'Schoolboy Life', which highlighted books like *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and 'Stories of Inventors and Discoverers' or 'Illustrated Periodical Literature'. In 1875, London was the topic, with a long essay headed 'London in Print' introducing a group of new books about the metropolis including *Dickens' London* by T. Edgar Pemberton, *East and West London* by the Reverend Harry Jones, and a folio edition of *London, A Pilgrimage* by Gustave Doré and Blanchard Jerrold.

The introduction to the 1875 supplement summed up the editorial approach. Choosing an appropriate gift book from the huge number of titles on offer was difficult and *The*

²¹² Ibid. *Homes News* was primarily published for British expatriates in India and other parts of the Empire.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹³ *BKS*, October 1865, p.648.

²¹⁴ BKS, December 1865, p.791.

²¹⁵ BKS, November 1859, pp.1361-62; November 1861, pp.681-90.

²¹⁶ Christmas Bookseller, 1875, pp.5-11.

Christmas Bookseller was designed as a guide for the discerning: 'to select judiciously involves the exercise of a most delicate discrimination'. ²¹⁷ The criteria for the selection was clearly stated:

> The canons are simple – merit, fitness, desirability. The book selected must be good of its kind, agreeable to the taste of the receiver, a desirable possession. 218

The advice comprised recommendations for all the family and revealed an unsurprising picture of Victorian middle-class decorum. Picture books were chosen for young children while school children were praised as having a 'prodigious appetite' for stories but warned to avoid unwholesome subjects. Books that were 'quieter in tone' were thought to be preferred by girls but generally most of the books provided for them in the issue would appeal to either sex. 219 For young ladies, books of poetry and works of 'a religious tendency' were recommended while young men had a much wider choice with books about their future professions or books on travel, science or the arts. ²²⁰ The bookish expectations of the matron of the house were narrowly domestic; books would be highlighted to help her with drawing room small talk such as 'a handsome table-book stuffed with pictures'. 221 The gift would be particularly appreciated if the colour of the binding matched her curtains. Her husband, on the other hand, should be presented with books about countries he may have visited, or titles to deepen his expertise or encourage one of his hobbies.²²² By the late 1870s, the need for the supplement was even greater as readers had become yet more 'fastidious and critical' in their expectations of the content and quality of their books, so booksellers had to be even more discriminating with the selections they presented.²²³ Rising to the challenge, *The Christmas* Bookseller was an 'intellectual banquet' of the best books to be given as gifts or tokens of

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.1.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.1.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.1.

²²⁰ Ibid., p.1.

²²¹ Ibid., p.2. ²²² Ibid., pp.1-2.

²²³ Christmas Bookseller, 1878, p.1.

affection, and within its pages were 'descriptions, specimens, illustrations of the intellectual and artistic wealth of the greatest book mart in the world'.²²⁴

Unfortunately, not all of *The Bookseller*'s supplements were well-received. In January 1865 *The Literary Gazette* was launched as an attempt to fulfil Whitaker's original wish that *The Bookseller* would be as useful for book-buyers as for booksellers. Published on the 10th of each month and priced at 2s, it consisted of the collected lists of the titles published in the classified lists of the 'Publications of the Month' section and included 'descriptive notices of the greater portion' of the titles listed. Booksellers were urged to stimulate sales by sending the supplement to customers in their own printed wrappers:

The Literary Gazette will be found one of the most efficient modes of increasing general business, and of securing a circle of regular customers [...] It is published at this low rate and is also supplied in quantities at the mere cost of paper and print, for the purposes of promoting the sale of books; and we believe that if the circulation of *The Literary Gazette* be taken up by the trade with any amount of earnestness, the sale of new books may be largely increased... *The Literary Gazette* will be found one of the most efficient modes of increasing general business, and of securing a circle of regular customers. ²²⁶

However, the venture was not successful, and publication quietly ceased after six months. It was perhaps this failed venture that finally convinced Whitaker that he should devote his efforts in the journal exclusively to the requirements of the book trade.

Back pages

Again, emulating the example of *The Publishers' Circular*, the final section of *The Bookseller* presented classified advertising for businesses allied to the book trade, for the

²²⁴ Ibid., p.1.

²²⁵ The second page in the first issue in 1858 stated Whitaker's intention that the journal would 'be equally useful to the book-buyer as to the bookseller'. There are no surviving documents to indicate whether this journal had any associations with William Jerdan's weekly literary journal *The Literary Gazette*, published from 1817 but which had recently ceased publication in 1862 after years of decline. Whitaker may have just wanted to use the usefully descriptive and now unencumbered title.

²²⁶ BKS, January 1865, p.3.

recruitment of staff, and for certain kinds of books. It was a marketplace for the exchange of information, products, and services, and used information crowd-sourced from the trade itself. The section acted as an unmediated broker between the parties, although some of the entries used the offices of *The Bookseller* as a point of contact. The service was not free and, perhaps as a means of filtering out disreputable or unworthy advertisements, charges were applied. Inserts for individuals seeking employment were charged at 2/6, while those from employers were charged at the higher rate of 3/6.²²⁷ In the absence of a central repository, this virtual noticeboard was an invaluable source for potential assistants and bookshop workers and gave them a rare glimpse into the book trade's backrooms and stockrooms.

The notices contained the specific requirements of employers and gave details about the skills, experience, and high standards of behaviour expected of aspiring bookmen and bookwomen. Respectability, good character, and references were essential for both junior and managerial staff. Other requirements included bibliographic knowledge, experience in similar businesses, and specific language skills. Most of the opportunities were in Britain, but the international nature of the book trade and of *The Bookseller*'s subscribers meant that assistants with wanderlust could respond to requests for work in the colonies 'at a liberal salary', and those with foreign languages, especially German and French, could become managers and collectors for companies like Quaritch in Piccadilly. Some employers even insisted on the commitment of financial resources, as in the case of the two 'respectable young men' required by W. H. Smith to take charge of one of their railway bookstalls but who needed to find a security deposit in order to apply. As Charles Wilson's study of W. H. Smith suggests, the low calibre of some of the early bookstall employees led to the

²²⁷ BKS, January 1875, p.2.

²²⁸ *BKS*, January 1865, p.84.

²²⁹ BKS, May 1865, p.259.

development of a system of managerial oversight to ensure financial probity amongst a dispersed network of bookselling staff employed across the country.²³⁰

Most of the individual advertisers were men although women did also use the service, particularly those seeking posts in the stationery and fancy trades. Examples include the thirty-year old 'young lady of excellent character' from Poplar in east London who had a 'practical knowledge of stationery, bookselling, and the fancy trade' and now sought a post in a country establishment. Another 'young lady' from Cheltenham had wanted an engagement in 'the bookselling, stationery and fancy business' and could show several years' experience in her 'highly satisfactory references'. Unsurprisingly, the opportunities for men were greater in number and variety, both in the roles they might be offered and in the types of businesses offering work. Few employers asked for women. The expected candidate was male and typically described as 'young', 'experienced', 'energetic', or 'respectable'. Particulars of the wages offered were not usually included but men could expect to consider a wider range of opportunities, ranging from experienced managers to junior assistants. Some were even bold enough to try to set their own terms, such as the 'working foreman' of a printing office who stated that he would not accept less than 30s per week.

A variety of professional services were offered in these pages, such as accountancy and auditing, bookbinding, and business valuations. Businesses for sale appeared in the back pages from the earliest issues but, by the 1860s, many of the advertisements were placed by professional valuers, particularly Mr Holmes of Paternoster Row and Mr Newman of Great Winchester Street. These gentlemen were expert salesmen and categorised each business based on their practical knowledge of the book trade. They assessed the likely sale value and

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²³⁰ Wilson, pp.101-2.

²³¹ BKS, January 1865, p.84.

²³² BKS, January 1867, p.342.

²³³ All these examples are found in the September 1865 issue on p.649.

²³⁴ BKS, January 1865, p.84.

marketed the key features of each business, such as the attractiveness of the premises, the quality of the fittings and value of the stock, the rent and likely profits to be made, and whether there was any 'goodwill' – the intangible assets or local reputation of a business – to be transferred to the new owner.²³⁵ The businesses themselves ranged from small or provincial bookshops valued at a few hundred pounds to substantial established firms with returns of £1,400 a year offered for £8,000.²³⁶ Firms looking to expand also used these pages to attract 'moderate capitalists' wanting to act as investors or partners.²³⁷ The entries attest to the diverse nature of the book trade, with many firms trading in books and stationery alongside jobbing printing and binding. Once tabulated and analyzed, these details would indicate the fluctuating value of book trade businesses in the Victorian period.²³⁸

The last section before the 'Alphabetical List' contained lists called 'Books Wanted' and 'Books for Sale'; these reveal some of the methods used by booksellers to track down hard-to-find volumes and clearly illustrates another of *The Bookseller*'s roles as a forum that connected disparate parts of the bookselling network. Although its main concern was the trade in new books, the second-hand market was an important element of many bookselling businesses as the profits from it were more certain. A correspondent from Edinburgh wrote that the expected margin from new books ranged from 10% to 15% but could go up to 50% for second hand titles. According to David McKitterick, 'every town of any size had its second-hand shop'. London was particularly well provided for with clusters of second-hand booksellers in the areas around Holywell Street near the Strand, Farringdon Road, Shoreditch and, south of the Thames, in New Cut. Late Despite the presence of these

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²³⁵ BKS, April 1867, p.341.

²³⁶ BKS, September 1865, pp.648-49. The page numbers first few pages of the October issue were incorrectly repeated by the printer.

²³⁷ BKS, September 1865, p.649.

²³⁸ As indicated in the Conclusion chapter of this thesis, there is a plan to undertake a quantitative analysis of these entries to examine some of the financial considerations of bookselling.

²³⁹ BKS, March 1859, p.792.

²⁴⁰ David McKitterick, 'Second-hand and Old Books', *CHBB6*, pp.635-73, (p.636).

²⁴¹ Ibid, p.639.

booksellers, it was difficult to track down individual titles as there was no central repository of information of their whereabouts. Information was exchanged in the back pages of periodicals such as *Notes and Queries* which acted as a sort of 'literary clearinghouse', but, as there were no finding catalogues to locate these rare books, many older and hard-to-find titles lay hidden away in private libraries.²⁴² These lists were more accessible for ordinary booksellers than antiquarian catalogues and lists, and extended the book-finding services that they could offer their local customers. The lists also reveal a significant trade in ordinary secondhand books, titles that were not necessarily significant from an antiquarian perspective but individual copies that still had a commercial value and were sought to complete a collection or fill a hole on library shelves.

'Books Wanted' was a service that Whitaker borrowed from the German trade and which he claimed had become 'the general mode of procuring second-hand or scarce books'. 243 Whether that was true or not, he incorrectly stated that *The Bookseller* was the first to offer this service. *The Publishers' Circular* already made space at the back of most issues for a list headed 'books wanted for purchase' including in the year before Whitaker launched his own journal, as shown in Fig. 20. Regardless of who first offered this amenity, it was intended to help booksellers and librarians find specific titles, usually for older, hard-to-find, rare and out-of-print titles, and antiquarian books that had been requested or were required to complete a collection. By drawing on the collective inventory and expertise of its readers, *The Bookseller* provided a useful resource that was open to anyone who might benefit from it.

²⁴² Patrick Leary, 'A Victorian Virtual Community', *Victorian Review*, 25, 2 (2000), 61-79, (p.66). ²⁴³ *BKS*, June 1859, p.1002.

BOOKS WANTED TO PURCHASE. *** Letters to be addressed to Low, Son, & Co., Publish Austin on Jurispradence. Bayle's Dictionnaire Historique, 10 vols. 8vo. Books on Time:—Temporisour, the Observer of Time, 1584.—Time's Anatomie, 1606.—Time Well Improved, 1657.—Discourses about the Right Way of Improving Time, 1693.—Great Importance of Redeeming Time, 1714.—The Employment of Time, 1750.—Thoughts on Time and Eternity, 1767.—Hints on the Improvement of Time, 1794.—On the Proper Employment of Time, a Sermon (Maltby), 1806.—The Day's Occupation on the Employment of Time (Translation), 1818.—Double Life, or Way to Redeem Time (Dunton), 1750.—Great Events from Little Causes, 1776. Brougham's Lives of Men of Letters, 2 vols. royal 8vo. Builder (The), January 22, 1853, Vol. 11, No. 520. Buttman's Irregular Verbs. Clergy List for 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1847, 1850. Crabbe's Life and Poems. Vol. 4 (Murray, 1834). Criminal Trials, 6 vols. 8vo. D'Urfey's Pills to Purge Melancholy. Vol. 6. Fielding's Works, 10 vols. 8vo. Vol. 5, 1821. Game of Backgammon. Herbert's Poems, 2 vols. 8vo. Vol. 1. Homer (Kennedy's), 2 vols. 8vo. (Whittaker). Jarrell's Britiah Birds. Journal of Sacred Literature. No. 3 (Old Series). Kennedy and Granger's Survey of Shropshire for the Board *.* Letters to be addressed to Low, Son, & Co., Publishers' Circular Office, stating lowest price, carriage free. Lancet (The), Volume from January to June 1856. Medical Gazette, No. 116, Vol. 5, 1829; No. 124 and Supplement, Vol. 6, 1830; Nos. 1 to 6, 9, 10, 11, Vol. 13, 1833-4; Nos. 30, 31, 32, Vol. 14, 1833-4; No. 15, Vol. 19, 1837; No. 49, Vol. 20, 1837; No. 4, Vol. 21, 1837-8; Nos. 18, 21, 26, Vol. 35, 1844-5. Milton's Works, 8vo. Vols. 1 and 7 (Pickering). Moore's Power of the Soul over the Body. Last post 8vo. edit. Napier's Peninsular War. All after Vol. 5. Paigrave's History of the English Commonwealth, 2vols. 4to. Patrician Magazine, edited by John Burke. January 1848. Plymley's View of the Agriculture of Salop (R. Phillip). Poetry of the Passions, 18mo. or 32mo. Reach's Claret and Olives, small 8vo. Retrospective Review, 16 vols. 8vo. Ricauti's Rustic Architecture, Part 1. Roouefort's Glossaire de la Langue Romaine, 3 vols. Roquefort's Glossaire de la Langue Romaine, 3 vols. Sedgwick's Means and Ends, 18mo or 32mo. Stoughton's Windsor, small 8vo. Stoughton's Windsor, small 8vo. Survey of the Agriculture of the Channel Islands. Table Wit, 18mo. Tytler's Scotland, with Index, 10 vols. post 8vo. Voltaire's Works, in English, 36 vols. 12mo. Watts's Songs, Stothard's Designs, 12mo. Waverley Novels, last edition, complete in 25 vol. each vol. published separately at 9s. Vol. 11, after Vol. 14. Wellington Despatches, original edition, complete Wellington Despatches, original edition, complete complete in 25 vols. 8vo., ly at 9s. Vol. 11, and alt Journal of Sacred Literature. No. 3 (Old Series). Kennedy and Granger's Survey of Shropshire for the Board of Agriculture. Kingsley's Westward Ho! Vol. 1. Knight's Pictorial England. Part 23, Geo. III.—Vol. 3, Wellington Despatches, original edition, complete in 12 vols. and Index (Murray). Wilson's History of Dissenting Churches. Wood's Athenæ, by Bliss, 4to. Vols. 2— Wood's Essay on the Genius of Homer. 4 L, to end. Lancet (The), No. 446, Vol. 1, 1831-2; No. 465, Vol. 2, 1831-2; No. 14, Vol. 1, 1834-5; Nos. 2, 10, 15, 17, 19, 1831-2; No. 1 Vol. 2, 1836-7.

Fig.20 The Publishers' Circular²⁴⁴

The service was popular and expanded from a half page in the late 1850s to six or more pages by the mid 1870s.²⁴⁵ Requests were often by made for missing volumes of multivolume works, past issues of periodicals, and copies of rare titles such as a 1716 edition of the complete plays of Mrs [Aphra] Behn.²⁴⁶ In order to encourage booksellers to use the new service, the advertising fee was waived for up to six lines as long as the books had not been advertised elsewhere, undercutting other publications such as *The Times*.²⁴⁷ Responses to the entries were to be cleared through *The Bookseller* and forwarded to the advertiser. Concerned about the risk of unsuitable books being advertised, and in order to maintain the respectability of the journal, all entries appeared at the editor's discretion and could be rejected 'without assigning any reason for doing so'.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ *PC*, 1 October 1857, p.428.

²⁴⁵ BKS, August 1876, pp.760-65.

²⁴⁶ BKS, May 1865, p.253.

²⁴⁷ BKS, June 1859, p.1002.

²⁴⁸ BKS, January 1865, p.86.

From January 1866, 'with a view to rendering *The Bookseller* still more useful', a list of 'Books for Sale' was added that operated on similar lines. These were 'rare and curious' books, unusual titles that were no longer required or had been 'over-bought' or 'bought by mistake', but which might appeal to another bookseller.²⁴⁹ Together, the advertisements in these back pages offered readers a direct connection to a variety of services and products, provided lowly assistants with the opportunity to further their careers by tapping into a national network of employers, and consolidated the reputation of *The Bookseller* as a provider of information services that was becoming central to the operations of the book trade.

The Reception of *The Bookseller* and Conclusion

Two years after the launch of *The Bookseller*, Whitaker boasted of its success:

If we look at the position of the trade now with respect to information compared with what it was two years ago, it must be admitted by all that a great change has been affected; there is no longer the apathy and ignorance of literature that then too frequently prevailed; we set the example which has been copied by others, and Booksellers are now thoroughly well informed of all professional matters. ²⁵⁰

He received letters of appreciation for the journal. A bookseller from Peterhead in Scotland thanked Whitaker for including so much information that was useful for the country bookseller.²⁵¹ Another reader wrote:

Your excellent *Bookseller* is now *the* journal of the trade, and I have the pleasure of informing you that, in my neighbourhood, its opinions, information, and general management, are very highly appreciated – your claims upon the gratitude of the trade are already acknowledged.²⁵²

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²⁴⁹ BKS, March 1866, p.275.

²⁵⁰ BKS, December 1859, p.1490.

²⁵¹ BKS, June 1859, p.1014.

²⁵² BKS, April 1859, p.867.

This letter may just have been an attempt at flattery, but Whitaker was now buoyed enough by the trade's response to raise the subscription price to 5s. This was the same price as *The* Publishers' Circular and signalled that the neophyte was at least as valuable as the more established title as a means of communication and a showcase for advertisements.

It was soon clear that Whitaker had created a new kind of specialist publication and that *The Bookseller* was the inspiration for similar titles in other sectors of the retail trades. Claims were quickly made for *The Bookseller* as the progenitor of the new genre of trade organ:

> The success of *The Bookseller* has already called forth *The Draper and Clothier*, The Stationer, and The Ironmonger. We observe a new relative announced as The Chemist and Druggist. 253

According to Andrew King's study of the trade and professional press, the rapid proliferation of these titles was a response to changing economic circumstances and the increased competition that followed.²⁵⁴ Mass-produced products needed efficient distribution systems for delivery to a growing and increasingly dispersed network of retailers. New trading practices were required and retailers, who had formerly relied on acquiring the necessary knowledge and expertise through apprenticeships and training, now needed to access a wider range of commercial information in order to be competitive. ²⁵⁵ Enterprising publishers followed Whitaker's lead and produced trade journals for narrow but committed readerships by providing an essential information service. They were described by Hosgood as containing 'virtually all the information a dedicated, progressive, retailer could possibly require: price lists, bankruptcy details, advertisements, obituaries, editorial comment, letters to the editor, and trade news'.256

²⁵³ BKS. August 1859, p.1151.

 ²⁵⁴ King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', p.581.
 255 King, 'The Trade and Professional Press', p.581.

²⁵⁶ Chris Hosgood, 'The Shopkeeper's 'Friend': The Retail Trade Press in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain', Victorian Periodicals Review, 25, 4 (1992), 164-172, (p.165).

The City Press (1857), the local newspaper for the City of London, quickly articulated what these new journals offered their trades:

Most of the important branches of trade are setting up journals of their own for the purposes of intercommunication, mutual defence of interests, diffusion of intelligence, and, let us hope, the improvement, on no narrow or selfish basis, of the particular branch of commerce so represented.²⁵⁷

The Bookseller was hailed not only as the first of these new journals but also as the archetype:

At the head of the list [of new journals] stands, properly enough, *The Bookseller* which we consider a very great improvement upon such issues as *The Publishers' Circular* and *The Literary Advertiser* [Bent's]. *The Bookseller* is a thorough epitome of trade news.²⁵⁸

Earlier specialist publications such as *The Pawnbrokers' Gazette* (1838) and *The Grocer's Weekly Circular and Price List* (1846) had collated useful information about products and their prices but, according to *The City Press*, were 'left far behind' by the new breed of journals. The new titles offered more than just product and price lists, and readers now had access to impartial commentary and analysis of the relevant commercial sector and assessments of new products.²⁵⁹ *The Bookseller* later claimed, admittedly by its own account, to have innovated many of the characteristic features of the new trade journals:

no trade organ has exhibited any praiseworthy feature which was not indicated in our very first number. ²⁶⁰

Precisely what these features were was not specified but *The Bookseller* vigorously defended its claim as the prototype:

There were class journals, both literary and otherwise, in existence before that date [1858], but the essential distinction of a trade journal was unknown until after *The Bookseller* had led the way.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ City Press, 26 November 1859, p.6.

²⁵⁸ City Press, 26 November 1859, p.6; The Bookseller, November 1859, p.1327.

²⁵⁹ City Press, 26 November 1859, p.6.

²⁶⁰ BKS, March 1880, p.247.

²⁶¹ BKS, November 1882, p.1045.

A definition of this 'essential distinction' was not forthcoming. Nonetheless, the shift in emphasis from providing a showcase for publishers' new works to addressing the needs of the booksellers set *The Bookseller* apart from both *Bent's* and *The Publishers' Circular*. The editorial content Whitaker provided was a combination of trade-focused news stories, expert commentary and market analysis that, together with the provision of a forum for raising and debating issues of concern across the trade, gave *The Bookseller* its distinctive journalistic features.

The Bookseller was well received by the book trade and, as its editor, Whitaker became a trusted expert on the questions that were central to the welfare of the book trade such as copyright, underselling, and the trade conventions that helped to facilitate everyday commercial transactions. He became an unofficial monitor of the activities of the trade with the ability to expose undesirable activities that threatened to damage its respectability. He advocated regulation, encouraged debate, and used his position to try to maintain a degree of equilibrium between traders of unequal financial power. For historians, the monthly issues of The Bookseller provide not only the most comprehensive book lists and advertisements of books produced in the last third of the century, but also offer tantalising glimpses into the complexities and frustrations of booksellers as they tried to make a living out of selling books.

Joseph Whitaker devised *The Bookseller* as a modernised trade publication that prioritised the requirements of the bookselling trade rather than those of the publishers. He had big ambitions. It would be much larger than its rivals, carry more pages of advertisements drawn from a much wider range of publishers, and would include extensive journalism to disseminate valuable information about the book trade, up-to-date news, and commentary on issues of the day. The journal acted as both a conduit of and a forum for trade discourse to encourage booksellers to exchange and their share knowledge, and to see

themselves as a coherent body of traders who, by collective action and mutual understanding, could find solutions to problems arising from commercial tensions. The nature and impact of this modernised trade journalism is examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Four Trade journalism in *The Bookseller*

Introduction

This chapter establishes the characteristics of trade journalism and examines how it was used by Whitaker to fulfil his editorial mission to provide the book trade with a comprehensive information service, shepherd his readers through the complexities of what he regarded as a insufficiently regulated trading environment, and foster a sense of community within the book trade so that it could act collectively in its own best interests.

Whitaker intended for *The Bookseller* to do more than just provide the bookselling trade with information about new books; it was also an attempt to transfer some power to individual booksellers by boosting their self-confidence and encouraging them to see themselves as part of a trading community with shared interests rather than just a collection of rival businesses along a supply chain. In response to new commercial imperatives from a more diverse bookselling trade and a more competitive and deregulated market for books, The Bookseller encouraged engagement and participation from its readers, inviting them to use the journal as a public square where their opinions could be heard and where they could exchange their knowledge and expertise. The abolition of the Booksellers' Regulations in 1852 freed booksellers from restrictive pricing policies and injected much needed dynamism into their activities but it also exposed them to new risks. It was an unfortunate irony that within eight years of 1852, five of the nine main undersellers who had campaigned for this very reform, including John Chapman and Edward Moxon, had floundered and lost their businesses. To try and limit the numbers of booksellers enduring similar fates, Whitaker surmised that a trade publication could inform its readers of the opportunities available to them and of the threats to their businesses, could provide guidance to trade conventions and instil a sense of pride in the achievements of

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¹ Barnes, p.141. Moxon's business was taken over by his printer and he died in 1858.

predecessors, and could represent the interests of a more diverse and dispersed bookselling trade than had previously existed.

At the outset, Whitaker had promised that his journal would provide more information about new books in book lists and advertisements; the trade journalism he provided was an additional, complementary information service. The journalistic legacy of this service is more than just a rough first draft of book trade history, it is a richly detailed and under-exploited historical resource that, along with its main rival *The Publishers' Circular*, promises new avenues of research for book trade history. Although *The Bookseller* was not the only book trade journal, and the journalism it contained could be inconsistent and imprecise, its pages provide the most comprehensive account of the concerns of the book trade of the time. The information collected, organised, and disseminated in *The Bookseller* eventually formed the foundations of a bureaucratic and organisational infrastructure for the book trade as it evolved into a recognisably modern industry that was eventually willing to submit to governance and regulations in its own best interests.

In order to examine the nature and impact of Whitaker's efforts, this chapter has been organised into five sections. The first section establishes trade journalism as exemplified in *The Bookseller* as a distinct genre and outlines its main components and features. The subsequent sections focus on its four main functions: to highlight business opportunities; to provide guidance to the customs and conventions that underpinned commercial transactions; to monitor trade activities and warn of threats to the welfare of the trading ecosystem; and to foster a trade identity and develop a sense of community spirit.

² Eliot and Sutherland have already identified some of these avenues in their Introduction to the Microfiche edition of *The Publishers' Circular*.

A modernised trade journalism

In 1888 Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press argued that The Bookseller was the originator of a new kind of trade journalism:

The first number of the *Bookseller* may claim with justice to be one of the parents of the modern Trade Journalism, for it comprised within itself all the germs of what has since developed into the typical trade journal of to-day.³

According to the *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, trade journals were a sub-class of specialist or class journals.⁴ The term 'trade journalism' was not in general use in English until the late 1860s. Fig. 21 shows the chart from Google's Ngram viewer that dates its first usage in 1859, a year after the launch of *The Bookseller*.

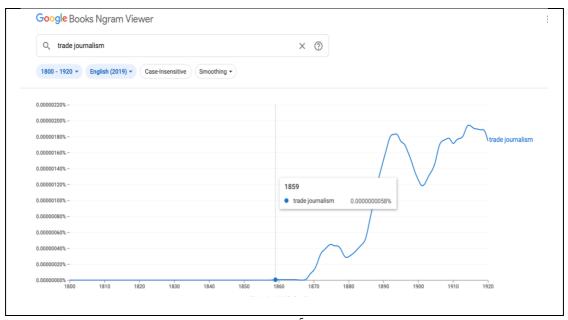


Fig.21 Google Ngram of 'trade journalism'5

Modern trade journalism as exemplified by *The Bookseller* differed from the editorial content published in *Bent's* and *The Publishers' Circular* in a number of ways. At the time that Whitaker launched his publication, the rivals produced only a little editorial content or 'literary

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³ Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press, (London: Sell's Advertising Agency, 1888), pp.143-162.

⁴ *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, eds., (Gent: Academia Press and London: British Library, 2009), p.634.

⁵ Created 18 March 2021. 'Class journalism' emerged in the 1850s.

gossip about new books. The Publishers' Circular had occasionally printed letters from readers in the early 1840s and some statistical information about book production from the late 1840s, but it was not until the 1870s under Edward Marston's editorial influence that the range and volume of the journalism expanded significantly. By contrast, from the outset Whitaker offered his readers a combination of factual news reporting with more subjective commentary, market analysis, and reviews, and encouraged them to engage as active participants in the debates of most concern to them. As discussed in the previous chapter, his hope was that a better-informed book trade could perhaps see itself as a community of traders with shared values and collaborate to reach a consensus on how to resolve some of the more damaging trade practices. This modern trade journalism was built on principles of fairness and of 'levelling the field' on which booksellers had to operate by making sure they had all the information they needed and offering the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Other trades quickly followed the example set by *The Bookseller*. For some this meant supporting or initiating campaigns against adulterated or unsafe products.⁸ For instance, *The Grocer* (1862) explicitly stated that one of its aims was to counter the problem of food adulteration.⁹ *The Draper and Clothier* (1859), on the other hand, was established to represent the interests of the 500,000 people engaged in the drapery business and save it from 'rottenness, disgrace, and decay' by reforming undesirable trade practices.¹⁰ For Whitaker the purpose of a trade journal was to support the book trade by raising standards of knowledge and expertise of booksellers as well as improving their working conditions and career prospects. Booksellers would no longer be so reliant on publishers for information about new books and

⁶ Laurel Brake, 'Headnotes' to *The Publishers' Circular*, Nineteenth Century Serials Editions, https://ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/tec.html [accessed 18 October 2020].

⁷ Eliot and Sutherland, pp.22-25.

⁸ Hosgood, 'Retail Trade Press', p.165.

⁹ *Grocer*, 4 January 1862, pp.8-9.

¹⁰ Draper and Clothier, Introduction to bound edition 1860, pp.iii-iv.

would now have the tools with which to appraise market conditions for themselves. Whilst his main concern was the welfare of booksellers, Whitaker did recognise the tensions in their relationship with publishers, and was careful that the information he provided met both the needs of his readers and those of the advertisers whose fees largely financed the publication.

The journalism in *The Bookseller* does not tell the whole or definitive story of the book trade between 1858 to 1895 but it does provide a record of the central concerns of the time and the attempts made to resolve them. It is a living history with all the imperfections, shifts in emphasis, and dead ends implied by such a description. Commercial tensions and the pressures to maintain profits pulled traders in several directions. Booksellers were not always in agreement with each other and could be inconsistent; they wanted the freedom to set their own prices at whatever level made most sense for their market but also wanted protection from the predatory pricing of others. Publishers wanted to protect their own copyright but also to exploit the copyright of others when compiling new editions or issuing reprints.

The trade knowledge that was collected and preserved within the pages of the journal contains a diverse collection of consistent and contradictory opinions and advice, correct and incorrect interpretations of factual events, inaccurate and accurate sets of figures and statistics, and bibliographic details of books that never reached the printers. The reporting was responsive to the needs of the book trade and to the shifts in the larger social and political economies which makes it hard to draw a consistent narrative about attitudes to the changing times. It is the combination of these elements that make *The Bookseller's* journalism such a valuable resource for historians trying to understand the experiences of ordinary booksellers. The extent to which Whitaker's journalistic efforts contributed to the economic fortunes of individuals or the trade as a whole is impossible to calculate, but *The Bookseller* did document the slow reconfiguring of trade practices, demonstrating how difficult it was to accomplish even the

most urgent reforms, even when there was broad consensus, without the organisational mechanisms with which to carry out the wishes of the trade.

Promoting opportunities: statistics and innovation

Whitaker was a keen collector of official data, statistics, and other factual information. Since his early years with J. H. Parker he had collected information from 'Blue Books', newspapers and periodicals and preserved it in a series of commonplace books that he later used as source material to answer readers' questions at *The Gentleman's Magazine*. ¹¹ The production of statistics in printed form was 'a distinctly nineteenth century innovation' and, by the midcentury, a great deal of it was available in a variety of publications. ¹² Although certain types of data had been collected since the Domesday Book, the formation of the Board of Trade in 1832, Whitehall's first statistical department, and the growth of statistical societies generated new kinds of information and knowledge. ¹³ Some of this information was disseminated in official government publications, the 'Blue Books', which became a publishing genre of their own. Numbers of new titles rose from 360 per year in 1858 to 1400 in 1895. ¹⁴ Aileen Fyfe describes them as 'monuments to the gathering and dissemination about Victorian moral and social concerns' and suggests that they gave ordinary people access to a wide range of statistics and data that encouraged efficiency and standardisation, and enforced standards. ¹⁵

The collection of data and creation of statistics on a national level helped to define the boundaries of nation states and became a means by which the state could plan political and

¹¹ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.114. The notebooks were later used to compile *Whitaker's Almanack*.

¹² Aileen Fyfe, 'The Information Revolution', *CHBB6*, 567-594, (pp.569-70).

¹³ Jon Agar, *The Government Machine: A Revolutionary History of the Computer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), pp.75-78.

¹⁴ Eliot, Some Patterns, p.73 and pp.139-43.

¹⁵ Fyfe, *CHBB6*, p.573.

social activities.¹⁶ For the booksellers, the provision of statistics about book production, the fluctuations of business cycles, the relative health of foreign trade, and the growth or decline of certain kinds of markets supported their businesses in several ways. An understanding of the state of the trade could lead to better forward planning and help booksellers recognise business opportunities and risks. What practical use booksellers actually made of the information is hard to know, but its inclusion in *The Bookseller* offered readers access to the same information and a shared understanding of their business world.

Statistics were an 'irregular but recurrent' feature of *The Publishers' Circular* from the late 1840s. ¹⁷ Examples include enumerations of the journal's own book lists, such as book and pamphlet production from 1839-42, and then 1849-52; book production in Holland between 1848 and 1856 reprinted from *The Athenaeum*; and a note of the rise in value of exported books in the first half of 1859 compared to the same period the previous year. ¹⁸ The volume of data increased after 1870 and included an annual 'Analytical table' produced at the end of each year enumerating the monthly production of books listed in the journal. ¹⁹ Statistical information was a regular feature in *The Bookseller* from the first year and this section examines the ways it was presented to create opportunities and help readers understand their market.

The first set of figures Whitaker provided were the announcements of 'sales by auction' of new and second-hand books which appeared in most months of 1858. Initially, the prices realised for some of these books were also included but this practice soon stopped for most sales as it was deemed to undermine the book dealers' ability to set their own prices for rare or unusual books should it be known what they themselves had paid for them.²⁰ Other types of

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¹⁶ Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information of Citizens since 1500* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.20.

¹⁷ Eliot and Sutherland, p.10.

¹⁸ *PC*, 5 December 1853, p.478; 15 March 1858, p.115; 1 December 1859, p.601. See also Eliot and Sutherland, p.7; p.10; pp.22-25.

¹⁹ Eliot and Sutherland, p.11.

²⁰ BKS, January 1860, p.1.

data were soon added. Over the course of 1858 examples included: the value of books imported into America (May); the population of Irish towns and the number of booksellers there, the value of paper duty received in the quarter to March 1858, and a list of literary pensions for the year (August); figures for Russian book production and a table of newspaper stamps issued in 1857 (September); figures for books sold at Bentley's trade sale and proceeds of sales of annuals in 1829 (November); stamps issued to Parisian journals (December).²¹

One set of figures that would really help booksellers but was hard to access were accurate and credible circulation figures. Publishers were notorious for exaggerating sales figures and Whitaker knew to treat them with care; he later mused that the figures claimed for some titles must 'somewhat astonish their printers'. ²² One of the few reliable sources for sales of periodicals was the statutory returns collected by the government for stamps issued to newspapers and magazines. The duty was abolished in 1855 but stamps continued to be paid in exchange for free postage and the returns were collected for a few more years. Table 9 shows data selected from the 1857 return. The figures revealed seasonal fluctuations; readers could note that many titles had steady or slowly rising sales, although some recorded a steep drop in the last quarter of the year. The Times, on the other hand, saw a significant rise of over 110% for 1d stamps across the year but a drop of 53% for 1½d stamps. The additional ½d was charged to cover the additional weight of supplements.²³ The Newspaper Stamp Act 1855 established the new rates for publications sent through the post at 1d for those weighing under 4oz and 1½d for those above. 24 Returns from both Bent's and The Publishers' Circular were similar and remained steady for much of the year, but both dropped slightly in the last quarter of the year despite that quarter including the December Christmas issues. This suggests that

²¹ *BKS*, May 1858, p.198; August, pp.351-52; September, p.393; November, p.491 and p.493; December p.584. ²² *BKS*. April 1969, p.298.

²³ *Literary Gazette*, 24 February 1855, p.122. The article noted that *The Times* wanted special rates as the paper weighed 5oz with one page of supplements and 6oz with two pages.

²⁴ Martin Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian England* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p.71.

although publishers' output increased to meet the seasonal demand, booksellers had already ordered much of their stock for Christmas over the autumn months.

	March	June	September	December
Bent's	3,000	3,000	3,000	2,500
The Builder	11,500	13,000	11,000	14,000
Clerical Journal	26,000	21,000	20,5000	17,000
The Field	57,500	59,000	58,500	65,500
The Economist	19,000	19,000	19,500	17,500
Illustrated London	306,086	385,628	370,691	359,051
News	at 1½d 85,000	at 1½d 90,000	at 1½d 90,000	at 1½d 25,000
The Lancet	14,950	14,950	15,075	15,275
Literary Gazette	3,000	3,500	3,500	3,000
Punch	43,000	40,500	42,000	45,500
The Publisher's Circular	7,800	7,800	7,800	6,500
Reynold's Weekly Newspaper	26,000	22,775	21,000	21,317
The Saturday Review	12,000	11,000	15,500	21,000
The Spectator	15,000	15,000	15,500	13,500
The Times	319,514	182,465	396,717	677,327
	at 1½d 569,320	at 1½d 693,345	at 1½d 534,296	at 1½d 265,807

Table 9 House of Commons 1d Stamp Duty quarterly returns 1857²⁵

²⁵ *BKS*, September 1858, p.393.

Whitaker was sometimes able to use statistics and sales figures to buttress his own convictions and reinforce former statements. In 1864, a detailed analysis of circulation figures of newspapers and periodicals was presented with explanatory comments in a report concerned with the effect of the removal of the paper tax in 1861. The figures had been compiled by John Francis of the literary journal *The Athenaeum*.²⁶ The intention of the report was to demonstrate the growth of the periodical press since the removal of the taxes on newspapers, advertising, and most recently on paper. Whitaker had been a supporter of the campaign to repeal the paper tax and had already predicted that it would be 'one of the largest boons to the trade'.²⁷ *The Publishers' Circular*, on the other hand, took a perhaps surprising view, declaring that the book trade, 'as a body', were 'indifferent on the matter' and that it was, 'as far as publishing interests were concerned, a point of no importance'.²⁸

It was Whitaker's view that the 'taxes on knowledge' had previously restricted sales and it was their removal, rather than the additional demand from population growth and increased literacy, that was responsible for the significant expansion of the press:

The extension of this branch of business is most remarkable, and much of the increase is attributable to the removal of the restriction which formerly existed, viz., the compulsory stamp on newspapers, the advertising duty, and lastly the excise duty upon paper.²⁹

For the sake of clarity, the sales of daily newspapers were aggregated into annual figures (see Table 10). The classifications changed over time which made direct comparisons difficult, and 400 country newspapers were not included in the figures as their circulations of around 800 copies each were considered too small.³⁰

 $^{^{26}}$ BKS, May 1864, p.310. Whitaker also praised Francis for his 'untiring exertions cheerfully and gratuitously given for many years' in the effort to reduce these taxes.

²⁷ *BKS*, February 1860, p.94.

²⁸ PC, 1 May 1861, p.185.

²⁹ BKS, May 1864, p.309.

³⁰ Ibid.

	1831	1860	1864
Newspaper stamps issued in England, Scotland and Ireland	38,648,314 England (32,000,000) Scotland (2,287,750) Ireland (4,360,654)		
Newspapers and class journals in London		118,799,200 (estimated)	
Aggregated annual figures in London for weekly and daily newspapers			195,062,400 (total included aggregated figures for daily newspapers)

Table 10 Circulation of Daily Newspapers and Class Journals 1831-1864³¹

Despite these limitations, readers could see the considerable growth in circulation over the three decades, with a rise of over 200% between 1831 and 1860, and a further 64% in just four years between 1860 and 1864 after the paper tax was abolished. The report added context to the figures by explaining that once the paper duty was removed, many newspapers and journals dropped their prices from 4d to 3d, and 2d to 1d, and gained 'a large additional circulation' as a result; *The Times* increasing its daily circulation by 13,000 copies.³² The figures for 1864 were then broken down further: see Table 11. General interest weekly magazines appeared in a separate listing: see Table 12.

Having presented the figures, readers' attention was drawn to the fact that three new immoral publications had quickly failed. Since 1861 overall sales of immoral publications had dropped from 52,000 annually to just 9,000 and were now 'in a fair way of extinction'.³³ The implication was that the expansion of other forms of acceptable and affordable literature had reduced the need for these unacceptable ones.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p.310.

London Newspapers and class journals	Weekly circulation	
1864		
Newspapers	1,149,000	
Illustrated newspapers	510,400	
Sporting newspapers	252,500	
Horticultural and Agricultural	47,000	
newspapers		
Building, Engineering, Mining and	44,050	
Railway newspapers		
Literature, Science, Art, also Literature	40,750	
with Political Leaders		
Medical, Chemical etc	15,300	
Law	12,000	
Musical	8,500	
Religious	183,700	
Daily London newspapers	1,488,000 (aggregated figure)	
Weekly total	2,263,200	
Annual total	195,062,400	

Table 11 Circulation of Weekly Newspapers and Class Journals 1864³⁴

Weekly Magazines 1864	Aggregated annual circulation	
Religious Literature	489,600	
15 publications, 1d & 1½d per number	102,000	
Journals: Useful, Educational, and		
Entertaining	734,000	
32 publications, 1d to 3d per number		
Journals: Novels, Tales, Biographical		
Sketches, Ballads of England, Poetry,		
Gossip	1,053,000	
(Some include musical scores).		
13 publications, ½d and 1d per number		
Romantic Tales, Daring Crimes etc	195,000	
8 publications 1d per number		
Immoral publications	9,000	
1d per number	[* down from 52,000 in 1861]	
Free Thinking Literature	~5 000	
2d per number	<5,000	
Total	2,485,600	

Table 12 Circulation of Weekly Magazines 1864³⁵

³⁴ Ibid.
³⁵ Ibid.

Aggregated annual circulation	
1,469,500	
400,000	
793,250	
338,500	
244,850	
363,250	
(** approx 91,000 in 1831-2)	
3,609,350	

Table 13 Circulation of Monthly Magazines 1864³⁶

Sales of monthly magazines had risen from 125,000 copies per month or 1,500,000 a year in 1831 to 3,609,350 in 1864, an increase of 42%, as shown in Table 13.

The 'number trade' was highlighted as having had 'an extraordinary increase' and increased fourfold since 1831.³⁷ The rise in sales of these publications, titles sold as part-works directly door-to-door by travelling 'canvassers' who crossed the country and visited areas without access to bookshops, were of interest to booksellers because they presented a potential threat to their own local markets.³⁸ Primarily non-fiction and illustrated titles, these books were produced by a few large publishing firms such as Blackie and Son, Jones and Virtue, and the London Printing and Publishing Company.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., p.309.

³⁷ Ibid., p.309.

³⁸ Michael Hancher, 'The Number Trade at Blackie and Sons', *Publishing History*, 55 (2004), 37-67, (p.38).

³⁹ BKS, May 1865, p.310.

The importance of circulating these figures to the book trade was two-fold. Access to this independently sourced information, rather than having to reply on gossip, hearsay, or publishers' exaggeration, enabled readers to make informed decisions about stock selections and levels. They could see the fluctuations in the popularity of different genres and select accordingly. In addition, publishers could use the circulation figures to inform their decisions for advertising by weighing the relative advantages of a selection of publications. In principle, the higher the circulation of a publication the greater the potential impact of the advertisements, but Whitaker suspected some claims of high sales were inaccurate. *The Daily Telegraph*, founded in 1855 and described as 'one of the chief emanations of the abolition of the compulsory stamp', claimed to have a higher circulation than *The Times* but did so 'with such clamour' that Whitaker commented that 'people in London' were beginning to doubt its truthfulness. ⁴⁰ However, sales figures were not the only criteria for making advertising decisions, efficacy also mattered, and *The Bookseller* noted that that some publishers had reported that they had received fewer responses from advertisements in *The Daily Telegraph* than from *The Times* and *The Standard*. ⁴¹

On occasion, *The Bookseller* managed to acquire the most elusive and dubious set of publishing statistics, sales figures for new books. Some publishers were inclined to exaggerate sales figures to create the appearance of strong demand and thus persuade booksellers to order large numbers to satisfy the supposed demand. Nonetheless, Whitaker was willing to quote figures when he trusted the publisher, such as the almost 1,000 sales for his former employee J. H. Parker's *Domestic Architecture*. ⁴² In the case of Mrs Beecher Stowe's *Minister's Wooing*, the report stated only that 25,000 copies had been ordered by booksellers rather than actually sold to customers. ⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.287.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.287.

⁴² BKS, October 1859, p.1273.

⁴³ Ibid.

From the early 1860s, *The Bookseller* collated its own annual lists of new titles published over the previous year. *The Publishers' Circular* had occasionally tabulated the numbers of new books published in their own lists, such as the table of new books listed between 1837-42 and 1849-52 that appeared in December 1853.⁴⁴ Similar lists were published on an ad hoc basis until 1870, after which the 'analytical tables' became a regular feature at the end of each year.⁴⁵ In *The Bookseller*, the idea for presenting these figures originated with *The Spectator* after a writer there had 'taken the pain to wade through' *The Bookseller*, now described as 'the leading organ of the publishing trade of Great Britain', to 'extract some returns of the publishing trade in this country'.⁴⁶ Readers who were 'curious about these matters' were encouraged to read the rest of *The Spectator* issue and preserve it for future reference. Realising the value of this information and acting on his own advice, Whitaker compiled the list himself and printed the totals in most of the January issues from 1863 onwards.

The lists did not include all the titles published each year as persuading smaller and provincial publishers to submit information about their titles was a persistent problem. Even thirty years later, *The Bookseller* reported that these publishers continued to be underrepresented, with a 'considerable number' escaping notice every year. ⁴⁷ Despite their deficiencies, the lists gave readers the chance to understand and appreciate emerging trends as the popularity of different categories of books grew and fell. Two sample years have been tabulated in Table 14 as an illustration.

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⁴⁴ *PC*. December 1853, p.478.

⁴⁵ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, pp.23-25.

⁴⁶ BKS, January 1863, p.2. *The Spectator* also presented a rare and useful collection of sales figures for some of the leading titles of the day based on information from publishers, see 3 January 1863, p.16.

⁴⁷ *BKS*, January 1890, p.7.

The Bookseller categories	18	68	18	889	% +/-
Religion	916	(1)	674	(4)	-26%
Children's works	607*	(2)	950	(2)	+57%
Novels	360	(3)	1181	(1)	+228%
Miscellaneous, Not Classified	328	(4)	494	(6)	+51%
Politics, Government, Parliamentary +	260	(5)	735	(3)	+183%
Annuals and Serials (volumes)	259	(6)	484	(7)	+87%
Poetry and Drama	219	(7)	348	(9)	+59%
English Philology and Education	213	(8)	261	(13)	+23%
History and Biography, Archeology	195	(9)	624	(5)	+220%
Travels, Topography, Geography,	188++	(10)	317	(19)	+69%
Exploration					
Classics and Translations, incl	176**	(11)	274	(11)	+56%
Modern Languages and 'Oriental'					
Medical and Surgical	163	(12)	262	(12)	+61%
Science, Natural History, Philosophy	137	(13)	440	(8)	+221%
Law	132	(14)	114	(17)	-14%
Illustrated books for Christmas	91	(15)	N/A	(22)	N/A
Naval, Military and Engineering	78	(16)	71	(19)	-9%
Agriculture and Horticulture etc	65	(17)	49	(21)	-25%
Trade and Commerce, Industry	52	(18)	170	(16)	+227%
Belles Lettres	N/A	(19)	198	(15)	N/A
Music	N/A	(20)	208	(14)	N/A
Architecture and Fine Arts	N/A	(21)	65	(20)	N/A
Sports and Pastimes	N/A	(22)	110	(18)	N/A
Total Titles Published	44	39	77	737	+74%

Table 14 New titles listed in *The Bookseller* 1868 and 1889⁴⁸

(category ranking in brackets)

-

^{*}Includes minor works of fiction

^{**} European and Classical Philology and Translations

⁺Politics and Questions of the Day

⁺⁺Travels and Topography

⁴⁸ BKS, January 1869, p.5 and January 1890, p.7.

As noted earlier, these categories must be treated with caution, but the figures do suggest shifting trends in popular genres. It will come as no surprise to literary historians that the clearest trend was the 228% rise in fiction between 1868 and 1889, and the 26% decline in the production of religious titles. History, Biography and Archeology also saw a strong percentage increase at 220% and Children's books grew steadily but English Philology and Education titles saw only a 23% rise to 261 titles by 1889. This growth may appear modest considering the Forster Act made elementary education compulsory in the decade following 1870 but the budgets of the new school boards were severely constrained and actual attendance in school was slow to grow with only 82% of school age children registered by 1895. In addition, the content and methods of the sale of some educational titles were contingent on directives from national and local governmental bodies rather than on solely commercial imperatives which acted as a check on publishers' incentives to originate new titles. As Weedon's research suggests, publishers slowly became more inclined to risk their capital once the market for educational and schoolbooks had expanded and stabilized both at home and overseas in the last decades of the century.

The seemingly slow growth of the category is also partly explained by the listing of educational titles, including schoolbooks and textbooks for university and public examinations, under several categories such as Classics for Latin primers, and Mathematics for student editions of algebra texts.⁵² In addition, some textbooks contained new content but were published under their original titles for many years even when the text was revised or adapted to bear little resemblance to the original.⁵³

⁴⁹ Weedon, Victorian Publishing, p.114-15; and Stray and Sutherland, 'Mass Markets: Education', CHBB6, p.373.

⁵⁰ Weedon, p.111.

⁵¹ Weedon, p.139.

⁵² See examples in the Publications of the Month column, BKS, February 1878, p.100 and p.104.

⁵³ See Weedon chapter on Educational Publishing in *Victorian Publishing*, especially pp.115-16 for a detailed explanation of the longevity of some school texts; and John Issitt, 'The Natural History of a Textbook', *Publishing History*, 47, (January 2000), (5-30) for the publishing history of a single textbook, *Goldsmith's Grammar of Geography*, as it was adapted to market conditions over a period of 56 years.

A further difficulty in assessing the overall market for educational books is due to the lack of consensus over what even constituted a textbook as, according to John Issitt, 'the textbook defies anything but the most general definition'. ⁵⁴ He concluded that a textbook is 'a focused educational programme in text allied to a scheme of work'. ⁵⁵ In *The Bookseller*, the range of titles advertised as educational included primers and workbooks, copybooks, spelling books and grammars, history books with sample questions, as well as classical texts, atlases, maps, and dictionaries. A systematic analysis of publishers' advertisements in *The Bookseller* may in due course contribute to more detail to the provision of educational texts and build on Weedon's previous work with *The Publishers' Circular*. ⁵⁶

The export market for books was of considerable importance by 1858 and a regular topic of interest in *The Bookseller*. Alexis Weedon's research has shown how sharply the value of book exports rose, from £35,841 in 1828 to £273,281 in 1858, and climbing even more steeply to £1,336,549 in 1898.⁵⁷ The benefit of these sales went primarily to publishers, but booksellers also benefitted by supplying English communities abroad and those travelling to foreign parts; Daniel Macmillan's memoir recounts the sale of £13 worth of books to a sea captain going to Bombay and another traveler headed for Italy spending £60.⁵⁸

America was a particularly valuable export market, with an enviable literacy rate of 90% in 1850, as opposed to only 50-60% in England.⁵⁹ Despite the lack of copyright protection for British works and the threat that an American publisher could reprint any title without permission or payment, British publishers' exports across the Atlantic increased. The figures in Table 15 were presented to demonstrate the increase in value of imports to America, rising 77% from 1851 to 1857.

⁵⁴ See John Issitt, 'Reflections on the study of textbooks', *History of Education*, 33, 6, (2004), 683-696, (p.685).

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Weedon's research uses figures drawn from publishers' advertisements in *The Publishers' Circular*.

⁵⁷ Weedon, p.39.

⁵⁸ Thomas Hughes, *Memoir of Daniel Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1882), pp.150-51.

⁵⁹ Seville, *Internationalisation*, p.147.

Imports of Books	District of New York in \$	Total US In \$
1851	421,764	494,152
1852	422,786	567,715
1853	629,172	723,221
1854	619,963	916,889
1855	624,443	893,371
1856	688,511	767,308
1857	623,216	874,404
Total in \$\$	4,029,855	5,237,060
Total in ££	805,855	1,047,412

Table 15 Importation of Books into the USA from The New York Herald⁶⁰

Readers could see that New York was the nation's literary centre and that in 1851 it represented 85% of the total US market.⁶¹ The availability of figures for the American market helped them to understand the reasons for the regular conflicts with the American trade over tariffs, and why the accusations of smuggling and piracy provoked by the lack of international copyright agreements mattered so much.⁶² The accompanying report noted that, although not all of these imports were from Britain, the true volume and value of imported books was even higher as the figures in the report did not include books that were imported duty free for use in schools and public libraries.⁶³

⁶⁰ BKS, May 1858, p.198. These figures should be treated with some caution as Whitaker was not systematic or consistent in the ways he sourced, credited, or presented the data. For instance, the figures for 1857 were credited to the Board of Trade returns but those for 1858 were not. The figures could also be inaccurate; the total value of books exported in 1857 was quoted as having been £426,521 in one issue in September 1859 but amounted to only £422,323 when presented in a different set of figures published in February 1860. Nevertheless, they are useful as indicators of the broad trends.

⁶¹ BKS, May 1858, p.198.

⁶² The nature of these conflicts is examined later in this chapter.

⁶³ BKS, May 1858, p.198.

Export figures were not presented in a consistent format but were regularly updated. Table 16 collates two sets of figures published in 1859 and 1860 that show the changes in value to overseas markets, including America.

Export markets	1857	1858	% +/-
United States	£133,247	£110,475	-17%
Australia	£113,372	£99,211	-12%
Rest of the World	£55,206	£28,650	-48%
Egypt	£41,910	£49,728	+18%
East Indies (India)	£35,993	£32,488	-10%
British North America (Canada)	£15,662	£15,753	+0.6%
France	£14,288	£10,698	-25%
Hanse Towns (Hamburg in 1858)	£14,277	£11,975	-16%
South and Western Africa (British Africa in 1858)	£12,595	£18,226	+45%
West Indies	£9,971	£13,380	+34%
Total	£426,521	£390,584	-8.4%

Table 16 Value of book exports 1857 and 1858⁶⁴

These figures were often printed with little or no explanation or commentary, so readers had to rely on later reports and analysis to fully appreciate the implications. In the case of the United States, the most valuable export market, the drop in value between 1857 and 1858 was not explained directly but a reference was made two months later regarding the perceived 'dearness' of English books that harmed all export markets. 65 The tightening of the export

 64 BKS, September 1859, p.1202 and February 1860, p.96. 65 BKS, April 1860, p.213.

market could also have been an early warning of an approaching war. In September 1861, it was reported that the American Civil War and the resulting hike in tariffs had depressed imports and exports, and that, as a result, returned bills were on the increase. ⁶⁶ Despite the volatility, America remained a key destination for British books.

Access to this sort of analysis was of great value to readers as few booksellers were likely to have the financial education or the time to analyse the figures themselves. In addition, the sources of this information, such as the 'Blue Books' and other government reports, were not easy to read. Even Whitaker, with his love of facts and figures, sometimes found them difficult due to poor presentation:

The parliamentary paper just issued gives these [figures] in so unsatisfactory a manner that we are scarcely able to extract an intelligible statement of the amount or value of either [exports or imports].⁶⁷

The reports continued to show the growth in exports, and even when figures appeared without a breakdown by country, as illustrated in Table 17, readers would see that exports rose 30% in the two years between 1864 and 1866.⁶⁸

	1864	1865	1866
Total exports	466,485	511,388	607,177

Table 17 Total value of book exports 1864-66⁶⁹

This sustained rise in exports prompted *The Bookseller* to provide additional information to support exporters with lists containing names of shipping agents and the locations they serviced. Table 18 shows the shifts from 1862 to 1869.

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⁶⁶ BKS, September 1861, p.520.

⁶⁷ BKS, March 1867, p.202.

⁶⁸ Ibid. See also Weedon, pp.35-45 for details on the growth of the export markets.

⁶⁹ BKS, March 1867, p.202.

Destinations	1862	1869
Australia and New Zealand	32	35
Cape of Good Hope	11	11
United States and Canada	12	19
Canaries, Madeira and St Michael's	2	5
East Indies and China	28	30
West Indies and Brazil	15	17*
Brazil	9	13**
West Coast of South America	15	12
Mauritius	8	N/A
Parsee Merchants	N/A	4

Table 18 International shipping agents 1862 and 1869⁷⁰

The list included familiar book trade names such as Henry S. King & Son and Smith, Elder (to East Indies and China), Trübner & Co (to the United States and the East Indies and China), Low, Son & Marston (Australia and New Zealand), and even Whitaker himself (to Vancouver Island and San Francisco).⁷¹ The presence of so many established trade names suggests that these firms were using their own experiences of exporting books to extend the service to trade colleagues. Those without any overseas connections would have appreciated assistance with unfamiliar paperwork, navigating tariffs or customs restrictions. As export regulations became

^{*} listed as West Indies in 1869

^{**} listed as to South America in 1869

⁷⁰ *BKS*, February 1862 p.119, and May 1869, pp.394-95.

⁷¹ BKS, May 1869, p.394.

more complex, a later issue of *The Bookseller* included instructions on how to complete the forms needed for exports to Canada.⁷²

These lists of shipping agents are an imperfect indication of the increasing importance of the export trade, but they do hint at the recovery of the trade with America after the end of the Civil War and signal the strengthening of the demand in Australia and New Zealand. These markets were to become the most important destination for British books overseas just a few years later, as confirmed by Weedon's research. While statistics and figures about book production might not help struggling booksellers in their day-to-day work, they could indicate areas of the bookselling business where opportunities might lie. In addition, absorbing this information could contribute to a better understanding of the economic forces acting on their own businesses in their own locality. It could also offer some reassurance to individuals that they were part of occupational group trading within an economic system over which they had little influence, and that their current difficulties were not necessarily the result of individual failure.

One of Whitaker's original intentions for *The Bookseller* was that it should foster a sense of community spirit within the book trade and encourage members to see themselves as a cohesive group of traders with common values and aims rather than just business rivals. To this end, statistics from the 1861 national census, first undertaken in 1801, were presented alongside those from 1851 to show the extent of the growth or decline in different areas of the trade. In total, 54,293 were listed in the 'Industrial Class' and another 3,580 listed as 'authors and literary persons' in the 'Professional Class'. ⁷⁴ Table 19 shows an analysis of the categories selected to appear in the story of the 1861 'Literary Census'.

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⁷² *BKS*, September 1885, p.882.

⁷³ Weedon, p.39. See also John Barnes et al, 'A Place in the World', *CHBB6*, pp.595-634, (p.598).

⁷⁴ *BKS*, February 1864, p.91.

Decreased numbers since last	1851	1861	%+/-
census			
Publisher, bookseller	8,433	8,184	-3%
Copperplate printer	907	686	-24%
Engraver	5,584	4,175	-25%
Paper manufacturer	14,501	13,357	-8%
Paper merchant, dealer	164	118	-28%
Type-founder	1,453	874	-40%
Increased numbers since last	1851	1861	%+/-
census			
Author, editor, writer	1,320	1,673	27%
Bookbinder	11,029	11,920	8%
Lithographic printer	1,990	2,912	46%
Newspaper agent, vendor	1,297	2,827	118%
Printer	26,024	30,590	18%
Rag gatherer, dealer	3,245	3,462	7%
Reporter, short-hand writer	207	642	210%
Stationer	5,476	6,967	27%
Waste-paper dealer	2	18	800%

Table 19 The 'Literary Census' 1861⁷⁵

The figures reflected the changes in the types of labour and skills needed for book making resulting from technological innovation. The table shows a slight reduction in the number of publishers and booksellers in 1861 but a sharper drop in numbers of copperplate printers, engravers, and type-founders. This was contrasted by the rise in the number of lithographic printers and reflected the on-going shift to the newer technology. Similarly, the reduction in number of type-founders was due to the development of stereo- and electroplates that required fewer workers. The reduction in numbers of paper manufacturers and merchants was linked to

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⁷⁵ *BKS*, February 1864, p.91.

⁷⁶ Secord, 'Science, Technology and Mathematics, *CHBB6*, pp.443-474, (p.457). For more information on midcentury developments in typefounding See also McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', *CHBB6*, pp.75-116, (pp.77-79).

the depression in the paper trade that preceded the abolition of the paper tax in 1861, a trend previously noted in *The Bookseller*:

As the duty on paper will cease on the first of October, we may expect that trade, until then, will be in a very depressed condition [...] We may therefore expect that with the removal of the duty many new mills will be opened, that a great deal more will be imported from abroad, and that by bringing the maker into direct communication with the consumer, prices will come down considerably.⁷⁷

On the other hand, the steep rise in waste-paper dealers and a smaller one in rag gatherers and dealers, alongside the decrease in numbers of paper manufacturers and merchants, indicated the shortage of rags in the mid-century. From these statistics booksellers could gain a holistic view of the trade they belonged to and better understand the transformations taking place within it.

While the problems associated with paper shortages would not be solved by booksellers, they did have a vested interest in knowing how solutions might be found. Technological advancements and innovations were central to the processes of industrialisation that had given Britain much of its global power, but the benefits were unevenly spread across the economy, and advantages for ordinary workers were often slow to become apparent. By 1860 only 30% of workers were in jobs that had been directly affected by these technical innovations. Many of the inventions and innovations that had transformed the book trade emerged in the first half of the century, such as steam-powered printers, mass-produced paper, case binding, and rapid distribution by rail, during what Eliot calls 'the distribution revolution'. By the end of the century, the long-awaited mass market for books had arrived, but between these periods there was a great deal of experimentation in papermaking, printing, binding, ink-making, as well as new business practices and bookselling strategies, some of which were reported in *The Bookseller*.

⁷⁷ BKS, May 1861, p.273.

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⁷⁸ Donald McCloskey, cited in Kristine Bruland, 'Industrialisation and Technological Change, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain Volume One: Industrialisation 1700-1860*, ed. by Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.117-46, (p.121).

⁷⁹ Eliot, *Some Patterns*, p.107.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the 'dawning of a modern scientific age' that is sometimes referred to by historians as the 'second industrial revolution'. 80 The Bookseller's reporting on technological developments was designed to help readers understand how they might be applied to bookselling, and coverage of these developments was particularly extensive in the 1860s. From 1861, a dedicated column headed 'Inventions and Improvements During the Month' listed the names of the patentees, the date the patent was granted and a brief description of the item.⁸¹ The details were sourced from the recently reformed Patent Office. The items listed included minor enhancements such as 'improved envelopes' or 'improved pens and pen-holders' but also more substantial innovations such as new patents for embossing and stamping presses, and machines for stitching and folding paper. 82 Many of these inventions were really improvements on existing technologies or techniques undertaken by 'shop floor inventors', small-scale and undercapitalised single traders such as a Mr Lay of King William Street near Covent Garden, who improved the process of photographic printing by devising a method of fixing and toning positive prints without immersing them in water. 83 Some entrepreneurial inventors even offered licences to interested colleagues like Scottish bookseller George Waldie and his hand-press printer which could print advertising materials using seven different coloured inks.84

An indication of the importance in which *The Bookseller* held these inventions and innovations was the exhaustive coverage of the 1862 International Exhibition, the successor to the Great Exhibition of 1851, in a thirty-two page report that was printed over five issues from

⁸⁰ Dave Muddiman, 'Science, Industry and the State: Scientific and Technical Information in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *The Early Information Society: Information Management in Britain Before the Computer* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp.55-78, (p.55).

⁸¹ The column started in May 1861 but had been discontinued by 1863.

⁸² BKS, January 1862, p.6; May 1861, p.276.

⁸³ Christine MacLeod, 'Negotiating the Rewards of Invention: The Shop-Floor Inventor in Victorian Britain', *Business History*, Vol 41, 2 (1999), 17-36, (p.17); *BKS*, November 1858, p.492.

⁸⁴ *BKS*, August 1862, p.560.

the eve of the exhibition in April to August 1862.⁸⁵ The lengthy account stated that it was important for the book trade to understand the emerging technologies and prototypes exhibited there as they would have 'an enormous influence upon the manufacture of books during the next ten years'.⁸⁶ The five-month long series was a showcase of the latest innovations developed by the book and allied trades, and an annotated guide to the most interesting or important items.

The book trades were grouped together in Class 28, 'Paper, Stationery, Printing, and Bookbinding', and located in the Gallery of the North Court of the Exhibition building in South Kensington. Educational books and accessories such as maps and globes were included in Class 29. Exhibitors from across the trade displayed their products and samples, from publishers and binders to ink and paper makers, typefounders, printers using new technologies like lithography and chromo-lithography, and producers of a wide variety of stationery. Official and unofficial exhibition guides were available, such as *Cassell's Illustrated Family Exhibitor*, but *The Bookseller*'s report also offered readers a valuable guide to the exhibits that included frank opinions on the range and quality of the exhibits.

Overall, *The Bookseller*'s impression of the Exhibition, at least with regards to the English displays, was one of disappointment and disgust, blaming the organisers of mismanagement and 'something savouring of jobbery and favouritism'. ⁸⁷ Important absences were noted, particularly from representatives of the newspaper and periodical press. Regret was expressed at the missed opportunities to parade the advances in British technological innovation since 1851, and questions were asked about the whereabouts of representative sectors, such as the penny press, that 'England can show beyond any other nation'. ⁸⁸ For

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⁸⁵ BKS, April 1862, pp.243-45, May 1862, pp.314-25, June 1862, pp.390-99, July 1862, pp.467-71, August 1862, pp.563-65.

⁸⁶ BKS, June 1862, p.390.

⁸⁷ BKS, May 1862, p.314.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

instance, there no examples of *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Manchester Guardian* to show foreign visitors.⁸⁹ Other sectors were also poorly represented: paper was 'unmistakably deficient', and letterpress printing had 'nothing new' to offer, although lithography and colour printing were 'fairly represented'.⁹⁰

Many of the entries consisted of just the names, addresses and brief descriptions of the exhibitors' products, but guidance was provided in the appraisals of the most notable or interesting exhibitors so readers could quickly find and assess the suppliers and merchants with whom they might want to establish business relationships. Publishers were represented by well-known names such as Bell & Daldy with their 'plain, substantial, gentlemanly-looking books', and Trübner & Co, who displayed the first volume of a Bible printed in Russian. Foreign publishers were located in the 'Foreign courts' and included representatives from France, Prussia and other German states, Russia, and Holland. Despite the deficiencies of the paper sections, some exhibitors were judged positively. The straw paper from Burgess and Ward of the Mendip Paper Mills in Somerset claimed to be better than rag paper for use in newspapers, railway timetables and commercial stationery. Although *The Bookseller* cast some doubt about the 'tenacity' of the paper, it was later awarded a medal at the end of the exhibition. Another straw-based paper from C. Hook Townsend from Kent was deemed smooth enough not to catch a pen's nib and recommended as being 'as good as can be desired'.

Book binding did not fare so well. While common binding was much improved thanks to 'trade rivalry of a [...] creditable nature', and English cloth binding was now 'as superior to that of the rest of the world as a Sheffield blade is to one of Paris make', there was disappointment that the 'better kind' of binding had not improved now that books were no

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ BKS, April 1862, p.243.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ BKS, May 1862, p.315; the award was mentioned in the August 1862 issue, p.564.

⁹⁴ BKS, May 1862, p.315.

longer luxury items and even schoolboys and servants had their own books. ⁹⁵ The overview of leather binding on display was that it was disappointing, with the conclusion that 'our binders of the present day cannot produce anything more elegant than the imitation of an old design'. ⁹⁶ Foreign binders, especially the French, were judged to be superior: 'in matters of taste, and delicacy of manipulation, the French are in advance of us'. ⁹⁷

Reports of printing technologies also drew a mixed response. While chromolithography was by now 'one of the most important branches of art manufacture', some of the examples from Messrs. George Rowney and Co were deemed mostly 'unexceptionable'. 98 Other printers fared better: Messrs. Maclure, Macdonald and Co.'s reproduction of Mr Thomas' picture of the 'Queen's Interview with the Invalids returned from the Crimea' was deemed 'a master-piece', and M. Curmer's 'The Hours of Anne of Brittany' described as 'matchless'. 99 However, photography, claimed by *The Bookseller* as having been 'perfected' by British photographers, was poorly displayed, having been 'stowed away in a sort of lumbergarret'. 100

The five-month long series of reports culminated with a list of the winners of awards and medals for the best exhibits in each class. ¹⁰¹ *The Bookseller*'s opinion of the winners and losers had been published in the previous issue and claimed that it was an 'almost universal feeling' that the prizes had not always gone to the right winners. ¹⁰² Nonetheless, and despite the complaints of a poorly planned event, readers, many of whom could not have visited the exhibition themselves, could read a comprehensive account of the event, together with insights

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.321.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.323.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.323.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.394.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.396.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.396.

¹⁰¹ BKS, August 1862, pp.564-65.

¹⁰² BKS, July 1862, p.467.

into the progress made in the art and technology of the mid-Victorian book trades. They also had a handy list of the most relevant exhibitors for future reference.

Even after the exhibition closed, the reporting of innovations and inventions continued, especially on topics that directly affected the book trade, such as threats of shortages of cheap raw materials for papermaking. The reduction in advertising duty that had driven the growth of the newspaper press had, by the mid-century, contributed to the acute shortage of rags, the raw material needed for papermaking. 103 The demand for paper increased further with the expansion of the stationery trade and the increased demand for ever-cheaper newsprint, but more paper was needed for new consumer items such as wallpaper, stationery, wrapping paper and paper-based toys. The urgency was reinforced further after the abolition of the paper tax in 1861, as paper no longer needed to be cut into individual sheets in order to calculate the tax payable and could be used from a continuous web. 104 The increased demand led to experimentation with novel raw materials such as esparto grass in the 1850s and later wood pulp in the 1880s. 105 The Bookseller reported on a paper-producing insect called the sustillo, a form of caterpillar from India that could weave a piece of paper a yard-and-a-quarter long which was 'so perfect in its texture and consistency' that it was ideal for writing. There was news of a fibre that produced a finished paper 10-15% lighter than that made from rags and that had the potential to reduce carriage costs. 106 Papers with special qualities were also noted, like those of Mr Ralston in Manchester, whose strong waterproof product was made by applying a film of hard paraffin on both sides, making it ideal for wrapping and only slightly more costly than existing papers. 107

¹⁰³ McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', p.92.

¹⁰⁴ Jeremy Black, *The English Press* 1620-1861, (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2001), p.179.

¹⁰⁵ McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', p.94.

¹⁰⁶ BKS, April 1862, p.247; April 1863, p.215.

¹⁰⁷ BKS, April 1878, p.292.

Some of the reporting inadvertently captured small but telling details of the move away from centuries-old methods of printing after about 1860. Lithography had been developed in the 1830s but it did not replace the use of wood- or steel-engravings until later in the century. 108 Even by the late 1860s, *The Bookseller* thought that the potential of lithography was still 'far from fully developed'. 109 Part of the reason for this was that existing printing inks were not suitable for the new machines. Letterpress printing also suffered from poor-quality materials, with some impressions having a 'grey and speckled appearance'; both type-founders and printers denied the problem was their fault. 110 The culprit was deemed to be the ink and the use of inferior manufacturing materials such as lamp-black. 111 French printers used the superior spirit black, with the result that 'much of the best French printing is better than the best of ours'. 112 Although only four patents for inks had been granted to 1850, attempts were made to find improvements and by the 1880s the number had increased to nearly a hundred, immeasurably widening the possibilities for colour printing. However, a letter in *The* Bookseller from an anonymous journeyman printer hinted that the problem with ink was a matter of culture rather than innovation; the problem lay not with inferior quality but rather the system of bribes and back-handers that prevailed in pressrooms as part of the practice of paying 'chapel dues'.114

Although experimental techniques and products were reported, *The Bookseller* was mainly concerned with the practical application of the results rather than innovation for its own sake. Products were judged primarily on grounds of utility rather than aesthetics or costs, and on their convenience and efficacy to the journal's readers. Bindings had to be suitable for the

¹⁰⁸ McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', p.87.

¹⁰⁹ BKS, 31 December 1867, p.1255.

¹¹⁰ BKS, March 1868, p.126.

¹¹¹ BKS, April 1868, p.203.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book', p.87.

¹¹⁴ BKS, May 1868, p.293.

purpose they were intended. For instance, Rivington's new bindings, designed to enable prayer books lie to flat, were admired for their flexibility as well as for their robustness and durability. Inevitably not all new techniques were successful. Readers were warned that a new machine for sewing books with wire rather than thread was deemed as 'utterly unfit for circulation in libraries' after a librarian wrote to complain that the wire-bound books fell apart after a few loans. In On another occasion, a number of publishers of 'cheap editions of the poets' were admonished for using low quality Dutch metal instead of gold on the edges of the covers of their editions as the brightness faded after a few months. It was suggested that these cheap editions be better 'relegated' to 'linen drapers and other outside traders' so that booksellers could maintain their reputations for higher standards.

As Stephen Colclough confirms, the pressure on book prices forced many booksellers to sell a variety of other items, such as printed accounts books and ledgers, blank forms and novel stationery items. ¹¹⁹ In addition to the advertisements placed in *The Bookseller* for these items, the main body of the journal highlighted the most interesting or newsworthy, such as poodle-shaped pen wipers and decorations for fireplace surrounds. ¹²⁰ Some stationery items were far ahead of their times. In a letter headed 'Books Superseded' and predating Google Glass by 130 years, the 'microphotoscope' was a portable invention designed to be worn as a pair of spectacles that magnified a series of tiny slides carrying photographic images of a text. ¹²¹ The slides slotted into the top of the glasses so the wearer could read a speech or a sermon. The letter boasted that the invention would sweep away the need for a gentleman's library and enable him to carry all his books in a waistcoat pocket. Unfortunately, whatever became of this

¹¹⁵ BKS, November 1874, p.941.

¹¹⁶ BKS, October 1877, p.869.

¹¹⁷ BKS, October 1879, p.905.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Colclough, 'Distribution', p.255.

¹²⁰ BKS, April 1872, p.282-83.

¹²¹ BKS, November 1885, p.1196. The invention was patented in 1884 and featured in *The Photographic News*.

invention was not reported. The increase in volume of new stationery products eventually prompted Whitaker and his eldest son to create a separate journal in 1880, *The Stationery Trades Journal*.

One technology that was slow to be adopted by the book trade despite *The Bookseller* reporting of its utility for business was electric telegraphy. Apart from forward-thinking firms such as Smith, Elder, who had been using 'telegraphic wires' since 1861 to communicate between the office in Pall Mall and printing works in the Old Bailey, publishers did not routinely include telegraphic addresses in their advertising until the 1880s. 122 A story in 1871 revealed that 250,000 telegraph messages were sent weekly by June 1871 and that telegraphy was becoming an instrument of business communication to rival the post card. 123 The column explained that the new technology had been assisted by the adoption by the Post Office of the Morse Alphabet, 'fast becoming the telegraphic language of the world'. 124 Nonetheless, it took another decade and half and the lowering of the charge to 6d per message before telegraphy was widely used in business. 125 The Bookseller then quickly compiled a directory of the shortened addresses of the principal publishers, stationers and wholesale houses across the country in a four-page alphabetical guide for booksellers. 126 The list was important as although some of the shortened addresses were obvious, such as 'Bagster' for S. Bagster & Sons and 'Clowes' for William Clowes & Sons, others such as Butler & Tanner's 'Selwood' and Sampson Low & Co's 'Rivsam' were not. 127 Some of the entries also included telephone numbers revealing the earliest recipients of numbers for local circuits: Armitage and Ibbetson in Bradford with number 3, T. and A. Constable in Edinburgh with the number 85, and S. W.

¹²² *BKS*, February 1861, p.95.

¹²³ BKS, June 1871, p.452.

¹²⁴ BKS, June 1871, p.452.

¹²⁵ BKS, October 1885, p.975.

¹²⁶ BKS, December 1885, pp.1147-50.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Partridge & Co in Paternoster Row with 90.¹²⁸ Telephones were not widely used until the 1890s but several of the larger publishers were early adopters. For instance, the connection of Messrs. William Collins, Sons and Co. to the United Telephone Company's system with the number 1536 was reported in 1881.¹²⁹

In addition to new technologies and products, readers were encouraged to consider novel bookselling methods and strategies. An early column from Paris reported a literary hire purchase scheme where finished copies of large and expensive books were sold and delivered to a carefully vetted group of customers with payments collected in instalments afterwards. 130 The practice was deemed preferable to publication in parts as the book-buyer was guaranteed the completed work. Other stories were aimed at writers as well as booksellers, such as the reports of two new companies that offered authors a better service than those of their rivals. The Athenaeum Publishing Company criticised the oblique accounting practices of most publishers and would publish on 'the author's account' without 'the customary vexations and annoyances' that accompanied publishing 'on commission'. 131 The National Publishing Company offered a 'reformed and equitable publishing system' where a 'fixed percentage on the clear profits is the only charge against a book'. 132 The practice of the author paying for the production costs of an edition plus an additional commission on sales was not uncommon, but the new companies promised transparency in accounting by agreeing the costs of the publication beforehand. 133 A more transparent system could appeal to the authors who were unhappy about the portion of the profits taken by publishers; even the most successful authors

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ BKS, October 1881, p.881.

¹³⁰ BKS, August 1858, p.352.

¹³¹ BKS, May 1858, p.196.

¹³² BKS, October 1858, p.432.

¹³³ Patrick Leary and Andrew Nash, 'Authorship', *CHBB6*, pp.172-213, (p.177).

like Charles Dickens grumbled about having to pay the publishers' commission, which could range from 5-15%. 134

The provision of details about new products and improved technology could not guarantee success, but having access to this information helped to create a fairer commercial environment and gave the smaller and more distant booksellers the same opportunity to stock the latest items as those based in more advantageous trading locations. In addition to keeping readers aware of these developments, *The Bookseller* also sought to provide advice and guidance to help the unwary and the inexperienced steer a safe course through an unpredictable business environment and contribute to the improvement of the bookselling trade as a whole.

Guidance, customs, and conventions

The abolition of the Booksellers' Association in 1852 removed more than just the controls on book prices, it also eliminated the mechanisms of scrutiny or oversight of the activities of traders. There was now no committee to ensure compliance with established business norms, customs and conventions, and any disputes that arose between rivals had to be settled individually and privately. The book trade operated under a collection of uncodified conventions, longstanding practices and customs that had evolved over time as economic circumstances or legislation demanded that were passed on through personal networks. The newer booksellers who had challenged the Booksellers' Association had different aims and strategies to the lettered bookman of earlier times. Characterised by publisher John Murray as 'solitary upstarts who [...] endeavour to filch away the customers from old established houses', these novices were less likely to have deep knowledge of the trade's history or feel bound by its

¹³⁴ Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*, Dickens Project edition (Santa Cruz: University of California Press, 1991), p.351.

conventions, increasing the likelihood of distrust and friction in their commercial transactions and adding to the costs of doing business.¹³⁵

Booksellers were worried that the behaviours of newcomers were undermining 'genuine' booksellers and that the propriety of the trade was under threat. One country correspondent protested that the trade had abandoned its respectability by allowing 'any broken-down tradesman, village-schoolmaster, or hairdresser who chooses to call himself a bookseller' to enter the trade. Not only were the businesses of what he called the 'legitimate booksellers' in the country trade being 'frittered away' by competition from these new traders who were willing to give away 2d in the shilling as discounts, but their 'credit and respectability' was also under threat. Without formal codes of conduct individual booksellers were likely to have only their social contacts or experiences to draw on to interpret novel or unfamiliar situations. Even experienced traders could find themselves in unfamiliar situations as a consequence of innovations in technology and business practices.

Whitaker used *The Bookseller* to furnish readers with guidance to all aspects of bookselling, including accounts of trade history and explanations of the customs and conventions that governed business interactions and transactions. According to Mike Noon and Rick Delbridge, forms of historical and institutional gossip such as house histories, obituaries, and death notices helped to establish an acceptable, if idealised, version of a collective history, a storied past that explained, legitimised, and reinforced the current value system. With a knowledge of their trade's history, they could understand the issues and any subtexts of the news stories, and learn to use trade jargon and colloquialisms, and would acquire some of the insider knowledge necessary to be full participating members of their trade, to pass as the *cognoscenti*.

¹³⁵ John Murray, letter to *The Times*, 2 April 1852, p.5.

¹³⁶ BKS, August 1861, p.477.

¹³⁷ BKS, August 1861, p.477.

¹³⁸ Noon and Delbridge, p.27.

The accounts in *The Bookseller* offered glimpses into the lives and businesses of booksellers that are unlikely to have been recorded elsewhere. These entries had an important enough function that all the names of the departed over the course of the previous year were collated and listed at the beginning of each new year. Lesser-known or smaller booksellers were remembered in brief mentions with the date and location of their passing and sometimes a note regarding to whom the business had been transferred, while the more eminent merited fuller tributes.

The longest obituaries were reserved for publishers and the larger bookselling businesses. Grandees of the trade were given fulsome accounts of their professional lives featuring highlights of their contributions to the trade's success. They also included some small but highly consequential snippets of trade history. For instance, William Longman (1813-1877) had earned his reputation as 'a complete master of the business' by working his way up through every department of the family firm, including spending time on the road as a collector. He was the originator of *The Publishers' Circular* and planned it as a replacement for *Bent's*, which he considered inadequate. Although he personally favoured retaining fixed pricing, he understood that the spirit of the time was against protectionism in 1852 and was one of the first to withdraw from the Booksellers' Association, thereby assuring its demise. The high regard with which he was held in the trade was demonstrated by an unprecedented mark of respect when most houses in Paternoster Row were partially closed on the day of his funeral.

Hagiographic some of these obituaries may have been, they helped to burnish the trade's reputation with sanitised accounts that emphasized the perseverance or industry of their subjects and rooted the book trade in a trusted and legitimate past. Men from all sides of the trade were included, such as writers Washington Irving and Charles Dickens, churchman and

¹³⁹ As noted earlier, *The Publishers' Circular* did also publish obituaries of prominent publishers.

¹⁴⁰ BKS, September 1877, p.784.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.785.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.785.

writer John Keble, papermaker John Dickinson, printer Richard Clay, and Whitaker's own rival Sampson Low. 143 Insights into the lives of deceased bookmen and the often-challenging circumstances of their working lives could also inspire sympathy for those currently in difficulties and encourage contributions to fundraising and other philanthropic efforts. 144

Where obituaries shaped the personal narratives of individuals, house histories enabled the recounting of broader stories of the book trade. The accounts were not exposés of past sharp practices or malfeasance, and were respectful rather than adulatory. Most accounts established the key personnel such as the partners and shareholders, details of titles and writers, and anecdotes that illustrated personal characteristics, such as determination and honesty, that led to the firm's success. Charles Rivington (1688-1742), founder of the Rivington publishing house, was described as 'devotedly attached to his business' in contrast to many of the profession at the time, and it was claimed that this steadfastness had resulted in his publishing John Wesley and persuading Samuel Richardson to write *Pamela*. ¹⁴⁵ William Blackwood (1776-1834) used his apprenticeship to acquire knowledge about books, spent all his leisure time reading and 'scrambled through a vast amount of knowledge which stood him in good stead in after life'. 146 The Bookseller also credited him with having improved the literary culture of the early nineteenth century by combining his 'decided habits of business' and characteristic 'courage, sagacity, and loyalty' to remove 'the intolerable incubus by which literature was in those days oppressed by Whig critics and their band of congenial lampooners'. 147 The book trade was not just a commercial business but also the guardian of culture.

Most of the house histories presented sober accounts of the gradual processes of establishing and developing businesses, book by book, opportunity by opportunity, merger by

¹⁴³ *BKS*, January 1860, p.4; July 1870, pp.573-74; April 1866, p.300; February 1869, p.111; January 1878, pp.7-8; May 1886, pp.418-20.

Whitaker's interest in trade welfare and philanthropy is examined in a later section of this chapter.

¹⁴⁵ BKS, December 1859, p.1491.

¹⁴⁶ BKS, June 1860, p.355.

¹⁴⁷ The lampooners were listed as 'Moore, Wolcot, and Company'.

merger. Readers would have been left with the clear impression that there were few easy routes to a quick or easy fortune in the book trade, with few accounts of overnight successes and even the most distinguished houses described as having been the result 'of slow growth, surrounded by discouraging circumstances, but yet eventually succeeded in attaining eminence'. The children's publisher Frederick Warne (1825-1901) was an exception. Having recently left his previous firm of Routledge, Warne and Routledge, he quickly built a list of 'the nicest and most creditable lot of books we have ever known a new house to produce in so short a time'. However, Warne's apparent overnight success was the result of his extensive knowledge of books, expertise in trade matters, and the goodwill in business that he had built up over the previous 15 years with the old firm. All these stories contributed to a shared folklore of the book trade, a part of an institutional memory bank that offered a reassuring picture of continuity and an honourable history that current members could be proud of. By recording and preserving these stories, *The Bookseller* became the *de facto* storehouse and guardian of book trade history.

In order to maintain the occupational legitimacy and professional pride of the book trade, and in lieu of a trade body to fulfil this function, *The Bookseller* issued guidance on the customs and conventions that had developed over generations, adapting to changing economic and regulatory conditions when necessary, and that underpinned commercial operations.

Whitaker was keen to preserve both the stability and reputation of the book trade and worried that its economic performance would suffer if these protocols were flouted. Unsuspecting booksellers could be taken advantage of if they did not know how to protect their businesses from unfair practices and unscrupulous colleagues. Misunderstandings and even outright

¹⁴⁸ BKS, August 1865, p.525.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

illegality could occur as one trader, whether intentionally or unintentionally, infringed on the rights of another, risking costly legal action, lost sales, and reputational damage.

Unfair practices that penalised booksellers were called attention to, especially those perpetrated by publishers. Part of the problem was the increasing number of new traders selling books. *The Bookseller* differentiated between booksellers who were really 'sellers' of books and those who merely reacted to customer orders, between *bona fide* booksellers and merchants who also sold books as a sideline. Proper booksellers were later defined:¹⁵⁰

We mean those who are really booksellers, not people who keep stuff and tobacco shops and sell a few periodicals or toybooks, but those who have an account with Longmans or Simpkins, and keep a stock of books.¹⁵¹

Complaints were made about publishers who supplied books to religious societies on the same terms as agreed with those who were 'really' booksellers. ¹⁵² With few or no overheads, and a captive audience in the form of a congregation, these arrangements by-passed local booksellers. Although reluctant to criticise the societies for what were seen as their positive roles in promoting 'religious truth', *The Bookseller* pointed out that some of them used their privileged position as a pretext to deny sales to local booksellers by acquiring books and stationery at trade prices then re-selling them to local school groups and congregations. ¹⁵³ Addressing the delicate question robustly by invoking the eighth commandment, 'thou shall not steal', a number of unnamed religious societies were accused of 'robbing honest tradesmen' by pursuing 'such practices as would and could only end in disgrace and bankruptcy if amenable to the ordinary business code'. ¹⁵⁴

Not all religious organisations were criticised, especially if their efforts did not threaten other booksellers' livelihoods. The Church of England Hawking Society were spared censure

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¹⁵⁰ BKS, October 1864, p.660.

¹⁵¹ BKS, October 1865, p.651.

¹⁵² BKS, April 1859, p.860.

¹⁵³ BKS, April 1859, p.860; May 1859, p.926.

¹⁵⁴ BKS, April 1859, p.860.

on the grounds that sales made by street hawkers were likely to be to people who would not have ventured into a bookshop so represented a new market for books. ¹⁵⁵ Similarly, complaints about individual clergymen ordering hymn books directly from the publishers were heard sympathetically. Whitaker's early bookselling experiences with Barritt in Fleet Street and J. H. Parker in Oxford gave him an appreciation of the financial responsibility shouldered by clergymen who were responsible for buying hymn books for their congregations. ¹⁵⁶ He added that once the initial bulk purchase was made, subsequent orders would 'probably' be made through the local bookseller. ¹⁵⁷

As the importance of religious books faded in the 1860s and that of educational books grew, publishers were again blamed for allowing direct sales of schoolbooks and general books to customers and to other non-trade retailers in country towns at trade prices. ¹⁵⁸ In several instances where trade prices were offered to drapers and grocers, Whitaker acknowledged that, although the practice was undesirable, he did not blame the retailers themselves. Instead, he advised booksellers to close the 'loopholes' for drapers and grocers by making sure their own inventory included a wide range of appealing titles at attractive prices. ¹⁵⁹

The Bookseller provided explanations and clarifications of some conventions that were not always well-understood, such as the remaindering of overprinted titles and the return of unsold books. Remaindering was the common practice of publishers selling off excess copies of an edition at low prices. Warehousing slow-moving stock was expensive and publishers could dispose of excess copies to booksellers as 'remainder' items with large trade allowances that were then retailed at very low prices. It was generally understood that remaindering should not harm the sales of new books and that all copies of a remaindered title, not just a portion of

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¹⁵⁵ BKS, March 1859, p.788; April 1859, p.860.

¹⁵⁶ BKS, August 1859, p.1155.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ BKS, January 1867, p. 19. Other examples of complaints include March 1869, p.227; June 1877, p.501.

¹⁵⁹ BKS, January 1879, p.4.

them, should be sold together. The root of the problem was the lack of consensus about how long after publication publishers had to wait before remaindering copies in order to safeguard the sale of new books. The view of *The Bookseller* was that a minimum of two years after publication was required for 'the higher class books'.¹⁶⁰

An incident with Alexander Strahan, a publisher known for his enthusiasm but poor business judgement, was used as an illustration of the dangers of misunderstanding the ramifications of the practice. ¹⁶¹ Strahan sold 2000 leather bound copies of several titles to Charles Griffin & Co, who then advertised them as 'choice remainders'. ¹⁶² A furious exchange of letters between the men headed 'What is a Remainder?' lasted several months. Perhaps sensing his error, Strahan denied that he had sold the copies as remainders and that he was merely ridding his warehouse of copies that had been bound in error and had continued to sell the rest of the editions in his own shop. ¹⁶³ Griffin suggested that Strahan's 'short experience' in the trade was to blame, but that he had compounded the insult in an 'unwarrantable breach of trade confidence' by revealing the price Griffin had paid for the books. ¹⁶⁴ Griffin was simultaneously embarrassed by the revelation of the commercial terms, and his reputation as an honest bookseller was impugned for incorrectly advertising the copies as remainders. Although not resolved to anyone's satisfaction, the incident exposed Strahan as a neophyte and an unconventional deal-maker of whom other booksellers should be wary.

There was also some confusion about the terms under which unsold copies could be returned by a bookseller. 'Sale or return' was the convention that allowed booksellers to return books they had bought speculatively on the condition that they could be returned for a full

¹⁶⁰ BKS, October 1864, p.660. No definition of the 'higher class books' was given but presumably referred to the more expensively-priced titles.

¹⁶¹ Patricia Thomas Srebrnik, *Alexander Strahan*, *Victorian Publisher* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1986), p.5.

¹⁶² *BKS*, February 1865, p.117.

¹⁶³ BKS, March 1865, p.158; May 1865, p.292.

¹⁶⁴ BKS, April 1865, p.227.

refund if unsold. Some publishers added books unsolicited to booksellers' orders, leading to objections about the costs of carriage in both directions if the books remained unsold. ¹⁶⁵ It was not a common practice in Britain, in contrast to the German and American book trades of the time, but it did happen. ¹⁶⁶ Publishers did not want to accept returned stock and booksellers did not want unsaleable stock taking up precious space. One correspondent suggested that copies could be returned with the carriage costs unpaid. ¹⁶⁷ There was a view that publishers would benefit should booksellers be willing to display books speculatively, but even in the 1880s *The Bookseller* doubted that, other than in certain 'isolated and special cases', the practice would be anything other than disastrous for publisher and bookseller. ¹⁶⁸ The former would never know whether they were trading at a loss and the expertise of the latter would be redundant:

What looked like a success in October might in the following March turn out to be a disaster [...] If everybody could get books on sale [or return], booksellers would soon multiply beyond all natural requirement, and then vanish. ¹⁶⁹

Although the 'sale or return' did not become widespread in England until the twentieth century, publishers did permit returned copies of unsold stock under certain circumstances; for instance, should the condition of the book be faulty, or when a new edition appeared before all the old copies a bookseller had in stock had been sold off. The Bookseller advised in these instances that the publisher was always responsible for imperfect copies, and it was 'the custom of the trade to take back all copies of the old edition' once a new edition was announced. Booksellers were also advised that if the retail price of a book was reduced by the publisher within two years of its dispatch to the bookseller, then the difference should be repaid.

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¹⁶⁵ *BKS*, February 1866, p.127.

¹⁶⁶ Chapman, p.7. Also see Barnes, p.57. See also Shaylor, Sixty Years, pp.152-54.

¹⁶⁷ BKS, April 1866, p.300.

¹⁶⁸ BKS, November 1883, p.1045.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ BKS, January 1860, p.3; October 1861, p.575.

¹⁷¹ BKS, October 1861, p.575.

¹⁷² BKS, October 1861, p.575.

Much of the guidance in *The Bookseller* was intended to reduce conflict between parties and try to limit additional costs to booksellers, but some of the queries also revealed the small but time-consuming frustrations. Bookshops were often small and cramped with little counter space, so the arrival of unfolded newspapers and periodicals was unwelcome. ¹⁷³ Opening with the adage 'time is money', a series of letters aimed at 'London newspaper proprietors' asked that newspapers arrive ready-folded. ¹⁷⁴ The correspondent added that he received 450 copies to fold each week. ¹⁷⁵ Another letter published two months later explained that there were only 150 folding machines in London, many fewer than in Scotland, America, and Germany, but more would be available soon. ¹⁷⁶ In the meantime booksellers should use 'their best efforts' to promote pre-folded newspapers and periodicals and refuse any unfolded ones: it was hoped that 'an appeal that touches the pockets of newspaper proprietors will soon be met with a response'. ¹⁷⁷

Other issues raised in *The Bookseller* were not necessarily concerned with financial risk but were intended to help booksellers understand how differences in national characters affected their book-buying choices. One such issue concerned whether new books should be sold with uncut or unopened pages. Machines could cut and trim the pages of the books before binding and American readers were thought be to too impatient of 'all such needless hinderances' to cut open the pages themselves. On the other hand, English book buyers preferred the pages unopened and considered the act of releasing the pages themselves an act of respect to the book making process. The practical implications of the trend towards pre-cut pages in the export trade became clear a few years later when an Australian bookseller,

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¹⁷³ BKS, November 1879, p.1043.

¹⁷⁴ BKS, November 1879, pp.1043-44; December 1879, p.233 and pp.235-36; January 1880, p.5.

¹⁷⁵ BKS, November 1879, p.1043.

¹⁷⁶ BKS, January 1880, p.7.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.5.

¹⁷⁸ 'Unopened' referred to the need to cut the pages apart, 'uncut' meant that the edges of the bound pages had not been trimmed leaving wider margins for subsequent re-binding. The terms were sometimes used interchangeably ¹⁷⁹ *BKS*, September 1871, p.731.

¹⁸⁰ BKS, September 1871, p.731.

described as a 'utilitarian' rather than a 'bibliomaniac', explained why he wanted books with uncut pages for his market. Amongst the reasons were the guarantee that uncut pages provided that the book was new as advertised, that re-binding would be easier due to the large page size, and that time-wasters could not read the book in the shop. 182

Back home, the issue remained live as the market for books broadened. While bibliophiles might enjoy the ritual of using a paper knife on a well-produced new book, those in other situations, such as libraries and educational settings, required cut edges. The reopening of the question prompted a wistful reminder of the need for an official trade forum where such matters could be discussed:

If we had a publisher's club or society, where publishers could meet and freely exchange ideas from time to time, some uniformity of plan might be agreed upon. 183

In the meantime, and with few signs of a trade association being formed, *The Bookseller* continued to provide what guidance it could to keep its readers versed in trade history and lore.

Overseeing and monitoring, highlighting threats.

The gathering, organising, and publication of trade news and gossip in *The Bookseller*, much of which were sourced directly from its own readers and advertisers, presented the editor with the opportunity to act as an unofficial watchdog. From his editorial vantage point, Whitaker could scrutinise the activities of individuals and companies, whether within the trade or from outside, for signs that they might constitute a threat to an individual bookseller, a location, or to the smooth operations of the trade as a whole. The reports might refer to individual acts of fraud in specific localities, such as the swindler in Manchester, who, over several years, defrauded

¹⁸¹ BKS, December 1875, p.1169.

¹⁸² Ibid., p.1170.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.1169.

London booksellers by placing small initial orders for books and settling the account, before placing larger and more valuable orders that were never paid. ¹⁸⁴ His actions were camouflaged by the long credit periods booksellers agreed with their customers. The police were powerless as the unsuspecting booksellers had willingly forwarded the books with an invoice so the unpaid bill was considered an 'ordinary debt' rather than a crime. ¹⁸⁵ Individual booksellers surviving on meagre profits were vulnerable to this sort of attack, so warnings of renewed attempts were issued in September 1859, August 1861, and April 1862. ¹⁸⁶ Other examples include notices of the fraudsters in Paternoster Row posing as publishers' travellers to steal remittances, and of the even more brazen thieves who managed to steal collectors' bags from a cupboard at Simpkin Marshall. ¹⁸⁷ At one point the problem was so pervasive that warnings of 'loose characters' operating in the Row prompted *The Bookseller* to offer a five pound reward for 'information as will enable the police to detect and convict any of the guilty parties'. ¹⁸⁸ Reports of the capture of fraudsters were not common but the rare successes were celebrated; the eventual capture of the Manchester swindler was reported in 1864. ¹⁸⁹

In a more sophisticated case, *The Bookseller* was able to call on the vigilance of colleagues in the Row and harness their willingness to cooperate to solve a crime described as the 'Lady Scott Swindle'.¹⁹⁰ Following the story over several months, the journal first reported that a useful pamphlet had been produced 'for the purpose of exposing the tricks, contrivances, dodges and other ingenious devices' used by a fraudster with a string of false names including 'James Hitchman', 'Miss Alexander', the 'Viscount de Montgomery', and 'Hamilton and Co'.¹⁹¹ This individual had made a comfortable living by 'laying traps for advertisers and

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¹⁸⁴ *BKS*, February 1859, p.723.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

¹⁸⁶ BKS, September 1859, p.1202; July 1861, p.393; August 1861, p.473; April 1862, p.424.

¹⁸⁷ BKS, December 1877, p.1167 and July 1884, p.675.

¹⁸⁸ *BKS*, October 1879, p.903.

¹⁸⁹ BKS, April 1864, p.239.

¹⁹⁰ BKS, June 1871, p.449.

¹⁹¹ BKS, May 1871, p.366.

others' by sending begging letters, obtaining credit with tradesmen and posing as an advertising agent. Suspicion was soon aroused about a new business in Stationer's Hall Court called Hamilton and Co.¹⁹² The assumption was that this was a new venture by the established firm of Hamilton, Adams, and Co., but few people were seen to visit the building other than the postman.¹⁹³ Further investigation found an advertisement on the back door for beautifying potions sold by a Miss Alexander.

Having been alerted to the potential threat in *The Bookseller*, several country booksellers reported that a Lady Scott had ordered many copies of one of Hamilton and Co's titles, a book of poems and essays by a Vernon de Montgomery. ¹⁹⁴ Fearing they would never be paid for the books, they raised their concerns with *The Bookseller*, which 'immediately warned the chief wholesale houses of the intended fraud'. ¹⁹⁵ Undeterred, the swindler changed strategies and wrote directly to a reader in Shropshire, asking for a loan of £100 in the name of V. de Montgomery. ¹⁹⁶ Clearly not a reader of *The Bookseller* himself, the swindler did not realise that his aliases were now public knowledge and that booksellers and publishers were using their trade journal to protect themselves and stymie his efforts.

Of all the threats to the welfare of the book trade, the two most consequential were the inadequate legal protections for copyright in the domestic and international markets, and the 'difficult and vexed' subject of underselling, the practice of unrestrained discounting of new books. 197 *The Bookseller* reported regularly on copyright matters for both philosophical and practical reasons but, as copyright was protected by legislation rather than convention, the emphasis was on keeping readers informed and up-to-date with any changes to the law,

¹⁹² BKS, June 1871, p.449.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.449.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.449.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.449.

¹⁹⁶ BKS, July 1871, p.536. The full details of the extraordinary career of James Hitchman were later revealed in 'The Science of Swindling' printed in *The Examiner*, 9 October 1875, pp.1136-38.

¹⁹⁷ BKS, April 1859, p.861.

clarifying misunderstandings, and acting as an expert but neutral mediator in any conflicts that arose. Although it was primarily a concern for publishers and authors, some booksellers produced their own books for sale in local markets. Adequate copyright protection was central to the wellbeing of the book trade, and a clear understanding of the legislation and its implications would minimize the likelihood of disputes.

The root of the problem regarding copyright was the fragmented nature of the legislation and the failure of the 1842 Copyright Act to provide comprehensive copyright protection. Publishers needed clear and reliable protection for the investment they made in acquiring copyrights, but *The Bookseller*'s reporting showed a trade struggling with the consequences of operating under a legal framework that lagged behind industry practices. These concerns were also aired and discussed in *The Publishers' Circular*, particularly in the late 1860s when the sections of editorial content were expanded.

The original intention of the 1842 Copyright Act was to improve protection for authors, clarify particular areas of the law, and consolidate the various statutes that applied to various forms of copyright material, such as books and engravings, into one Act. ¹⁹⁹ In the event, consolidation proved impossible, but the problems for publishers only grew as technological advances offered them increasingly inventive and effective ways of copying texts and reproducing illustrative material and artworks. In addition, the demand grew for works that were not originally committed to paper, such as lectures, sermons, and musical works, causing confusion among publishers of these works. ²⁰⁰ Attempts at clarification were made and several new laws were passed after 1842 that extended protection to the products of certain new technologies; for instance, photography and lithography were included in the Fine Arts Copyright Act of 1862, but protection for and legal definitions of derivative works such as

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¹⁹⁸ Seville, *Internationalisation*, p.36.

¹⁹⁹ Isabella Alexander, *Copyright Law and the Public Interest in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Hart Publishing, 2010), p.92-93. A full account of the evolution of the Act can be found in Seville, *Copyright Reform*. ²⁰⁰ Alexander, pp.92-93.

abridgements, adaptations, and translations remained unclear.²⁰¹ By the 1870s there were fifty-five domestic and international acts, treaties and conventions regulating the publication of literary and artistic material.

The Royal Commission appointed to find a solution discovered a dismal situation. The legal provision was 'wholly destitute of any sort of arrangement, incomplete, often obscure, and even when it is intelligible on long study, it is in many parts so ill-expressed that no-one who does not give such study can expect to understand it'.²⁰² Publishers themselves testified to the Commission that they did not always understand the law and how it might apply to their own businesses.²⁰³ The Committee strongly recommended reform but, despite bills being put forward in Parliament and lively debate in the trade and general press, there were no major changes to copyright legislation until 1911. There were many reasons for the lack of progress, including the sheer complexity of the existing provisions, and an inability within the book trade to formulate a consistent view of how to approach reform. This was partly the result of a lack of organization and the inability to lobby for change. Without clarity or guidance from legal experts, the 'widespread confusion amongst lawyers and sometimes utter consternation amongst practitioners in the book trade' was perhaps inevitable.²⁰⁴

In the meantime, the book trade had to manage as best it could. Despite having had no legal training, Whitaker became an expert in matters of copyright. He drew on extensive personal experience and deep knowledge of trade practices to provide illustrations, explanations, and clarifications for his readers. The airing of legal disputes was intended to show readers how the law affected them; helping them understand the underlying legal

²⁰¹ Alexander, p.158.

²⁰² Royal Commission on Laws and Regulations relating to Home, Colonial and Foreign Copyrights: Report, C.2036, Sessional Paper 1878, XXIV, vii, sect. 7.

²⁰³ For example, Mr Daldy did not know the provisions of American copyright, Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, cl 244, p.17; Alexander Macmillan did not know French copyright law, cl 261, p.18.

²⁰⁴ Lionel Bently, 'The Confusion, Uncertainty, and Dissatisfaction with Legal Protection of Newspaper and Periodical Titles in Nineteenth-Century England', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 51, 4 (2018), 692-715, (p.693).

principles of the fragmentary laws would, he believed, make them better able to avoid infringements and disputes:

the ventilation of the subject [...] will however be of service to the trade at large, for there has been a great deal too much laxity amongst publishers with regard to the rights of others.²⁰⁵

Greater awareness of the issues was beneficial for the whole trade and *The Bookseller* was doing 'good service both to the trade and to authors if we bring together information or opinions bearing on the subject'. ²⁰⁶ To this end, articles on aspects of copyright, reports of ongoing legal cases, summaries of disputes, as well as Parliamentary proceedings of ultimately unsuccessful bills were regularly published. For instance, a three-page extract from the new *Chambers Encyclopedia* appeared detailing the history of copyright and how it might be applied in certain situations such as for abridgements, for lectures, and for engravings and maps. ²⁰⁷ Later, a two-part article appeared about the history of the law of copyright and its effect on the use of artistic works and engravings to try to identify permitted uses. ²⁰⁸ Entire judgments of important cases were also printed in full, along with the judges' justifications and clarifications, so the underlying principles could be understood and future 'frivolous litigation' could be avoided. ²⁰⁹

The lack of consensus regarding what constituted infringement was a particular problem for publishers of cheap reprinted literature who needed to know what material could be re-used without the permission of the rights holder. From the earliest issues of *The Bookseller*, Whitaker sought to encourage adherence to good trade practices, such as acknowledging the

²⁰⁵ *BKS*, January 1860, p.1. This claim of being helpful was occasionally repeated: 'we shall be doing good service both to the trade and to authors if we bring together information or opinions bearing on the subject', February 1865, p.97.

²⁰⁶ BKS, February 1865, p.97.

²⁰⁷ BKS, August 1861, pp.479-81.

²⁰⁸ BKS, February 1865, pp.97-99, and March 1865, pp.157-59.

²⁰⁹ BKS, June 1881, p.512.

²¹⁰ William Cornish, 'Copyright', in *The Oxford History of the Laws of England Vol. XIII 1820–1914 Fields of Development*, ed. by Cornish et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 789-930, (p.901).

origin of reprinted information. Not surprisingly, he was especially concerned about the misuse of his own copyright and used it as an illustration to make the broader point:

We do not like to see our paragraphs copied without acknowledgement, and then requoted with contemporaries' names attached, as though the information in question had originally appeared in their columns.²¹¹

The use of published material in anthologies, abridgements, and adaptations had played an important part in the dissemination of high quality literature to a wide readership, including to younger and less well-off readers, resulting in a kind of 'trickle down' effect for literature. Some well-known authors, such as Sir Walter Scott, had benefitted from the regular adaptations of their work, but others saw what they considered the unauthorized use of their work as a threat to the viability of their own editions. As an example, it was reported that Charles Dickens had devised 'a new rendering of the Copyright Act' by objecting to a theatrical adaptation of one of his stories, and threatened legal action against the theatre manager. The Bookseller's view was that Dickens' action was both incorrect and unwise, as the adaptation would be a valuable introduction to his work. If the adaptation had been taken from a work that had not yet completed its serialized installments his consternation would have had greater justification, but in this instance 'Mr Dickens mistook both his legal power and his real interest'. In the instance of the copyright Act' is a daptation would have had greater justification, but in this instance 'Mr Dickens mistook both his legal power and his real interest'.

A widely misunderstood area concerned the use of book titles. There was no copyright protection for book titles nor a central register of those that had already been used, and it was not uncommon for publishers to use, inadvertently or otherwise, the same or a very similar title of an earlier book. Should this happen, the convention in the trade was for the second publisher to alter their title but not all publishers agreed. To illustrate the problem, a series of

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²¹¹ BKS, March 1859, p.787.

²¹² St Clair, 'The Political Economy of Reading', p.11.

²¹³ BKS, January 1861, p.3.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.5.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Bently, 'The Confusion, Uncertainty', p.693.

letters were printed between publishers who had produced books on a similar topic for the same readership, at the same price, with very similar titles. James Hogg's title, *Men Who Have Risen: A Book for Boys*, was already published and had been a success when a rival book called *Men Who Have Made Themselves: A Book for Boys* was announced by James Blackwood at the same price of 3/6.²¹⁷ Hogg accused the rival edition of attempting 'to sail into popularity under cover of the title and established reputation of another work'.²¹⁸ Blackwood dismissed the claim and avoided the central accusation, instead asserting that his edition was a 'legitimate exercise in competition' and that no publisher could monopolise a whole class of reader themselves, claiming in addition that his book was in any case more comprehensive and better written.²¹⁹ After airing views from both sides, *The Bookseller* concluded that each had made their case but the matter should now be dropped.²²⁰

It was later suggested that a reference list of all published titles should be held at the Stationers Company, but this was not acted upon.²²¹ The confusion continued until 1881 when legal clarity was finally accomplished with the case of *Dick v Yates*. Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, found that the titles of books, newspapers, and periodicals were not protected by copyright.²²² For the book trade, however, the 'plagiarism' of titles continued to be an ethical issue if no longer a legal one. Much of the blame was directed at the publishers themselves for not having even an 'elementary knowledge of bibliography' and not knowing which titles had already been used.²²³

In another area, advances in printing technology reduced the costs of printing illustrations but concerns arose about how the law should be applied to reproductions. *The*

²¹⁷ BKS, November 1859, p.1330.

²¹⁸ Ibid

²¹⁹ BKS, December 1859, p.1494.

²²⁰ BKS, January 1860, p.1.

²²¹ BKS, November 1859, p.1330.

²²² BKS. June 1881, p.512.

²²³ BKS, November 1883, p.1045.

Bookseller warned that 'the protection of illustrations is far less certain and adequate than is generally supposed' but there was hope that legislation would soon resolve the problem.²²⁴ In the meantime the 'popular error' was corrected that copyright could be acquired in the subject of an engraving, such as a view of a building, thereby preventing anyone else from creating a similar image. It was explained that it was not the view itself that was protected but rather the artist's image of the view, and that anyone could create a new engraving of the same view from the same location as long as it was not copied from an engraving 'in which the copyright has already been secured'.²²⁵

Nonetheless, confusion remained. In May 1864 there was a report of complaints by publishers of ninety-seven 'piracies by photography' and seven of lithographic works. ²²⁶

Twenty-seven legal proceedings had been brought including one in the Police Court. Most of the cases were settled with the offender having to pay a nominal penalty and costs, and the destruction of the copies with the pirated illustrations. The delinquents also had to sign a declaration that any repetition of the offence would result in a 'heavy penalty'. ²²⁷ Further clarification was offered in a long article which appeared a few months later, extracted from a pamphlet produced for wholesale dealers in photography. ²²⁸ For the use of engravings, the article detailed over five pages how the law protected not only the engraving itself, but also the design or artwork of an engraving as well as any prints that were produced by a print-seller. It also explained that permission had to be sought for any images reprinted in a book. ²²⁹ The advice was clear: the plate had to be produced 'within her Majesty's Dominions', must not be 'libellous, obscene or immoral', and the engraver must add the day of first publication and the

²²⁴ BKS, March 1859, p.787.

²²⁵ BKS, March 1859, pp.787-88.

²²⁶ BKS, June 1864, p.371.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ BKS, February 1865, pp.97-99. The second part ran in March 1865 pp.157-59.

²²⁹ *BKS*, February 1865, p.97.

name of the proprietor on each plate and each print.²³⁰ In addition, prints from lithographs could be protected as long as the originals had been registered at Stationers' Hall. However, in order to avoid the risk of legal action, publishers had to ensure that any illustrations they commissioned for their books were either clear of copyright protection or that the copyright holder had granted permission for their use.²³¹

Given that publishers that were most directly affected by the continued confusion, it was in their interest to find a solution, and in 1864 Adam Black of A. & C. Black sponsored a consolidating bill called 'Black's Bill'. *The Bookseller*'s report itemised Black's proposals. These included a right of dramatization of works of fiction and the extension of copyright protection to lectures, sermons, and musical compositions. However, after the draft bill was scrutinized and found wanting by fellow publishers, Black himself asked for the bill to be withdrawn. A second simpler bill was subsequently put forward but stalled in the committee stage.

Disputes over domestic copyright continued to be aired in *The Bookseller* and settled, where possible, in the English courts, but this was not possible for international disputes and the lack of international trade agreements generated a different set of problems. The market for foreign language books was modest but there was greater concern for the threat from cheap foreign reprints of British works. Publishers and booksellers seeking overseas markets were subject to tariffs that rendered British books prohibitively expensive, a situation that was exacerbated by competition from cheap foreign reprints of British copyright works. The importation of cheap reprints of British books produced abroad was outlawed in Britain and all its colonies in 1842 and any traders attempting to smuggling in these 'pirated' copies risked

²³⁰ Ibid., p.98.

²³¹ Ibid., p.97.

²³² PC also outlined the main provisions suggested by the Bill, 2 May 1864, pp.235-36.

²³³ BKS, April 1864, p.243, and July 1864, p.435.

²³⁴ BKS, July 1864, p.435.

seizure under various Customs Acts.²³⁵ Even copies carried by returning British travelers were at risk of seizure and subject to tariffs.²³⁶

Following the inevitable disputes, *The Bookseller* reported on developments and offered explanations to the regulatory regimes operating in other countries. Articles outlining the regulations for certain countries like Germany and France were printed as guidance until a comprehensive agreement was eventually negotiated, for most countries, in the Berne Convention in 1886.²³⁷ However, there was to be no international agreement with the United States, the largest and most important English language overseas market for British books, until the Chace Act of 1891. There was a lot at stake for the British trade: as early as 1820 70% of books published in the USA were by British writers, and books by popular writers like Charles Dickens would later sell in large numbers. ²³⁸ The absence of legal protection left publishers and wholesalers vulnerable to rises in tariffs and to lost profits through smuggling. Until 1891, copyright protection, and any hopes for payment, for British writers published in America was a matter for individual negotiation between publishers.

Without an agreement, the book trades on both sides of the Atlantic devised their own conventions, 'the courtesy of the trade'. Developed in the 1820s and 1830s, this convention proposed that the first publisher to the market had priority; any accidental conflicts would be arbitrated by a third party.²³⁹ The system relied on good personal relations and benign economic conditions both of which came under increasing pressure with the arrival of new traders who cared less about the old customs.²⁴⁰ By the mid-century there was strong American demand for cheap reprints of British books sold in general stores and on newsstands for 5c or

²³⁵ Seville, *Internationalisation*, p.4 and p.23.

²³⁶ Catherine Seville, 'British Colonial and Imperial Copyright', *Research Handbook on the History of Copyright Law*, ed. by Isabella Alexander and H. Tomas Gomex-Arostegui (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), pp.268-87, (p.269).

²³⁷ BKS, August 1861, pp.479-81; March 1862, pp.173-74.

²³⁸ Seville, *Internationalisation*, p.156.

²³⁹ Ibid., p.171.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p.29.

10c, but in cases where copyright was paid under the 'courtesy of the trade', prices were higher.²⁴¹ American copyright protected American citizens in part to safeguard its own trade's practice of reprinting foreign works.²⁴²

The Bookseller's view was that in the absence of a trans-Atlantic agreement, each side was perfectly justified in publishing works without formal authorisation, although 'morality and good taste' should encourage publishers to acknowledge the originating publisher.²⁴³ There were even some positive commercial advantages for publishers. While authors complained of lost income, British publishers benefitted from not having to pay for the reprinting of American titles:

'We regret the want of an international copyright law between the two countries; but so long as we go on reprinting American books, we must not grumble at their reprinting ours; in this there is some sort of reciprocity'.²⁴⁴

The same point was later made more bluntly: 'The Americans steal from us, and we from them'. 245 However, *The Bookseller* did acknowledge that, due to the size of the American market, the British trade had the most to lose – 'our treasury is fuller than theirs, therefore they can steal more from us than we can steal from them' – and that only an international agreement would finally resolve the conflicts. 246

Whitaker had excellent contacts in the American book trade, and particularly with the trade press. He had established a personal relationship with George W. Childs, (1829-1894), editor and proprietor of the prominent Philadelphia newspaper *The Public Ledger*. Childs later acquired the trade journal *The American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular* and installed Whitaker's eldest son, Joseph Vernon Whitaker, as editor before selling it on to

²⁴² Ibid., pp.28-29.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.148.

²⁴³ *BKS*, December 1858, p.584.

²⁴⁴ BKS, August 1864, p.523.

²⁴⁵ BKS, October 1866, p.866.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

Frederick Leypoldt.²⁴⁷ Whitaker junior returned to London in 1875 to assume the editorship of *The Bookseller*, bringing with him first-hand knowledge of the American trade and its principal publishers.

The importance of the American market was evident in *The Bookseller* from the outset. It was reported in the first issue in January 1858 that a new set of guidelines had been 'substantially adopted by the leading publishers of New York'. The new understanding extended copyright protection for fourteen years to books, although not periodicals, written by British authors under certain conditions. These included the requirement that an author give notice three months prior to publication in the US if they wished to secure US copyright protection and that the notification be made within thirty days of the British publication. The work should be published by a US citizen, be printed on American paper, and bound on American soil. The arrangement was to be reciprocated for American authors published in Britain. As the provisions were not legally enforceable it was inevitable that the new guidelines did not end the disputes. *The Bookseller* continued to report back regularly to the British trade on the latest disputes.

The lack of formal agreement was particularly difficult with regard to Canada, a British colony with a common language and a long land border. After Canada became a self-governing dominion in 1867, this border became an open door to the British market.²⁵¹ The ease of smuggling large numbers of British books across the border was a frequent topic. The case of Mr Shaw of Montreal illustrated the problem. Having bought a large consignment of books from several British publishers worth £14,000, he tried to smuggle them into America through Canada, by-passing the customs charges.²⁵² Tipped off by the agent of one of the exporting

²⁴⁷ Hruschka, p.157. Leypoldt renamed it *Publishers' Weekly* in 1872.

²⁴⁸ *BKS*, January 1858, pp.3-4.

²⁴⁹ Ibid

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Seville, *Internationalisation*, p.271 and p.275.

²⁵² BKS, March 1869, p.219.

publishers, the books were held in Montreal. A few escaped but were seized in Cincinnatti, and Shaw was arrested. Suspicion of complicity fell on the highly respectable houses who had supplied the books, including W. and R. Chambers, George Routledge, William Collins, and Frederick Warne, but they were quick to 'repudiate the slightest knowledge of such intention'. Following negotiations with the American customs authorities, the books were later released for repatriation into the care of Messrs. Bell and Daldy on behalf of the publishers. Further warnings of this kind of activity were issued in January 1870 and again in April 1872 under the heading 'American Adventurers'. This time *The Bookseller* tried to assert a moral as well as a practical viewpoint, reminding readers that it was in the trade's interest to support honest buyers and that the dishonest ones usually lost in the long run anyway. ²⁵⁷

In addition to the increased potential of smuggling across the border, Canada also complicated the question of copyright protection for American authors. The appeal of the Jeffreys vs Boosey case in 1854 had established copyright protection for foreign authors who were resident in a British territory at the time of first publication. However, the length or permanency of the residency was not defined and led inevitably to problems of the kind illustrated by *Routledge v. Low* in 1864. Sampson Low agreed to publish a work by an American author, Maria Cummins, after she travelled to Canada for two months to secure British copyright protection. ²⁵⁸ George Routledge disputed that the visit was sufficient to establish copyright in the work and published his own cheaper edition. The Vice-Chancellor found for Low and placed an injunction on Routledge's edition. Whitaker considered this case to have such important implications for the trade that the whole judgement was printed in full

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ BKS, March 1869, p.226; April 1869, p.299.

²⁵⁶ BKS, January 1870 p.5; April 1872, p.282.

²⁵⁷ BKS, April 1872, p.282.

²⁵⁸ BKS, August 1864, p.527.

over five pages so readers could understand the legal justifications.²⁵⁹ *The Publishers' Circular*, on the other hand, took a different approach to the issue. Although the case was of direct concern to Sampson Low, *The Publishers' Circular* had printed only a paragraph in anticipation of the case, and only several issues later did any further comment appear.²⁶⁰

This episode illustrates one of the main differences in philosophy of the two trade journals. *The Publishers' Circular* represented the interests of publishers, and as indicated earlier, especially those of the leading London houses. Even without a trade body, publishers held the balance of power within the trade and were a more cohesive group than the dispersed and diverse networks of booksellers. For instance, a publisher could marshal support for an initiative to protect their own interests, as demonstrated by Black's attempt to get his bill through Parliament. While booksellers usually sold their stock copy by copy at a discount of up to 25% and on credit terms, publishers had the advantage of being able to sell their editions in multiple copies of their books to regular bulk buyers. Although these sales were made with trade allowances, once these were agreed the remittances from wholesalers and circulating libraries were more or less guaranteed. With no copyright agreements with the Americans, British publishers could reprint American works without restrictions. In other words, publishers were insulated to some degree from the exigencies of the market, from customer demands for greater discounts and longer credit terms. *The Publishers' Circular* could afford to take a long-term view and issue a response several weeks later.

The response itself was a page long but took the view that the lack of a copyright agreement with America was primarily a problem for authors:

This, it must be confessed, is a hardship rather concerning the English author than the English publisher or bookseller, and one which may well be left to the discussion of those purely literary journals.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ BKS, August 1864, pp.527-31.

²⁶⁰ *PC*, July 1864, p.375.

²⁶¹ PC, 15 September 1864, p.499.

The article went on to remind readers that, in any case, the courtesy of the trade, 'the moral code regulating the relations of American publishers', mitigated the problems for publishers.²⁶² It was their view that there would be many benefits should the Anglo-American publishing trade be considered a single territory for the purposes of copyright and that, once the on-going civil war was resolved, the Americans would surely return to discussing how to improve the situation.²⁶³ Such gentlemanly *hauteur* was not feasible for *The Bookseller*.²⁶⁴

The injunction in the Maria Cummins case was appealed in the House of Lords in 1868, where it was confirmed that copyright protection could be established by residency, however brief, in a British territory, a decision that had the unintended consequence of reducing the pressure on the Americans to negotiate a new treaty. This time, *The Publishers' Circular* also decided the judgement was sufficiently important to merit printing the whole text under the heading 'Important Decision in the House of Lords Relating to Copyright'. Although English authors remained unprotected, the journal nonetheless assured readers, without evidence, that the Americans would not want to be 'outdone in liberal acts' and a solution would be forthcoming.

For *The Bookseller*, the lack of copyright protection for the British trade continued to be a source of consternation. Reports that American publishers were quarrelling among themselves over English authors' work provoked an indignant column in defence of their rights. Opening the piece with the statement that 'an English author has no rights whatever in the United States', the article outlined the ways an American could collect copyright protection from around the world in one afternoon.²⁶⁸ By instructing an American and a British publisher

²⁶² Ibid., p.500.

²⁶³ Ibid., p.500.

²⁶⁴ The tone of the reporting in *The Publishers' Circular* became more engaged and trenchant after 1867, when Sampson Low became its sole proprietor.

²⁶⁵ BKS, June 1868, p.363.

²⁶⁶ PC, 1 June 1868, pp.296-300.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.296.

²⁶⁸ BKS, May 1869, p.383.

to arrange publication for the same day, the writer could then travel from America to Canada for a day and, after 'buying a suit of clothes':

...thereupon he finds that by so simple a process he has obtained copyright in the United States, in the dominion of Canada, in Australia, India, France, Germany, and Great Britain! We can imagine the lively twinkle in his eye as he crosses the Suspension Bridge to think what cute people the Britishers are to have secured all these rights for him. ²⁶⁹

The Bookseller's umbrage could not bring about legislative change, but it could only wish that justice might eventually be found. In the meantime, the journal encouraged readers to engage with the issues and conveyed a sense of urgency in the hope that they would eventually be roused into action.²⁷⁰

For *The Bookseller*, no subject was more urgent or in need of action than underselling. According to James Raven, the whole bookselling system in the nineteenth century depended on the way books were priced:

The increased divisions between publishers and booksellers, but also the working of the entire onward-selling structure, turned upon the discount and remaindering system.²⁷¹

Unlike the much-needed reforms to copyright protection, the measures required to reform underselling were within the trade's control. Price discounting was a strategy used in a highly competitive market by booksellers attempting to increase their sales and attract new customers. It was also the means by which profits could be quickly drained from a small business. For the strategy to work, it had to be used judiciously, but *The Bookseller* was concerned with the levels of discounts on offer. According to the journal, acceptable discount rates were generally up to 'the conventional 2d in the shilling discount', or about 17%.²⁷² This was greater than had been allowed under the terms of the Booksellers' Regulations but without an agreed set of uniform rates, booksellers were free to offer their books at whatever price they wanted. Some

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p.384.

²⁷¹ Raven, Business of Bookselling, p.323.

²⁷² BKS, April 1859, p.866. In Some Patterns, p.59 Eliot calculates a range between 8% and 25%.

of the more egregious examples of underselling were highlighted to underline how damaging they were, such as a high-priced book with 'a very handsome' trade allowance to which the bookseller had added a mere shilling to set the selling price at 30s.²⁷³ In another example, a book advertised at 24s was reported to be on sale for 18s, a discount of 29%.²⁷⁴

In the view of *The Bookseller* underselling was 'the greatest evil of the day', a pervasive problem unique to the book trade that created 'an insane competition' that benefitted no-one.²⁷⁵ While both publishers and booksellers were blamed, it was the publishers' self-interest that was particularly condemned:

This spirit of underselling is said to be fostered by some of the larger publishers, who are charged with caring for nothing but their own immediate interests.²⁷⁶

Booksellers did not escape criticism and were accused of being complicit in their own destruction. They were accused of offering very low prices unnecessarily: 'booksellers have been so insane as to run the prices down in a manner totally uncalled for'. ²⁷⁷ It was a problem they had created for themselves as a response to increasing competition and they would have to find a way to resolve it. For there to be any hope of improvement, *The Bookseller* urged readers to 'make themselves acquainted with the pernicious results of the system'. ²⁷⁸ The journal itself undertook to be 'instrumental in bringing about a better state of things', and committed its pages to the collective effort of finding a resolution: ²⁷⁹

This is a booksellers' question; and if anything is to be done, it must be done by ourselves. Our columns will, to any reasonable extent, be open to the trade, and we shall be happy to recommend any well-intentioned plan.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ *BKS*, February 1859, p.722.

²⁷³ *BKS*, February 1859, p.722.

²⁷⁴ BKS, April 1859, p.866.

²⁷⁵ BKS, June 1858, p.241.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ BKS, April 1859, p.861.

Underselling was frequently discussed in the letter pages and in occasional editorials in *The Publishers' Circular* in the 1860s and 1870s, but there was little agreement as to where the responsibility for reform lay. Correspondents variously blamed booksellers themselves, wholesalers, and publishers.²⁸¹ Publishers themselves did not accept responsibility: 'A Publisher' wrote to *The Bookseller* stating his surprise at his colleagues' lack of interest in the issue, complaining that 'the London publishers and wholesale houses appear to take so little interest in this important subject'.²⁸² *The Publishers' Circular* doubted that a solution was even possible and that a solution was 'beyond the power of any combination of the trade'.²⁸³ For booksellers and *The Bookseller*, however, such resignation and passivity were not tolerable.

The abolition of the old Booksellers' Association in 1852 and the abandonment of regulations regarding discounting had initially been welcomed by many booksellers, but doubts soon set in. *The Bookseller* acknowledged there was no appetite for reviving the old publisher-dominated organisation, admitting that 'to revive the defunct association is clearly impossible'.²⁸⁴ On the other hand, there was concern within the trade that perhaps the implications of the abolition were not fully understood; one correspondent asked: 'did the conquerors forsee the effects of their victory?'.²⁸⁵ Publisher Alexander Macmillan was never convinced that abolishing the regulations had been a 'wise decision' and believed that the bookselling system has been weakened as a result.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, underselling, frequently described in withering terms such as 'this difficult and vexed subject' and 'the obnoxious reduction', was a critical issue for booksellers and it was, Whitaker argued, their responsibility to find an equable solution.

²⁸¹ For example, *PC*, 16 February 1864, pp.91-92 (publishers and booksellers); 1 March 1871 (booksellers), p.139; 16 February 1872, p.108 (publishers); 16 May 1972, p.312 (booksellers and wholesalers); 1 July 1872, p.407 (publishers).

²⁸² *BKS*, February 1861, p.100.

²⁸³ PC, 1 November 1865, p.602.

²⁸⁴ BKS, April 1859, p.861

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.866.

²⁸⁶ Charles L. Graves, *The Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1910), pp.286-87.

A year into the publication of *The Bookseller* an editorial appeared that tackled the issue directly. Provoked by the publication of an obituary of a bookseller who had died almost penniless after eighteen years in the trade, the column blamed 'the present ruinous system of underselling and competition' for his tribulations. ²⁸⁷ Raising the confidence of booksellers, in addition to expanding their knowledge of books and literary matters, would encourage them to take pride in their expertise and help them resist the pressure to lower prices.

The comments prompted 'a host of letters' from readers all over the country. ²⁸⁸

Correspondents broadly agreed that a solution was needed but there was little agreement on what it might be. ²⁸⁹ 'An Edinburgh (retail) bookseller' contributed a page and a half of analysis of the problem in Scotland and blamed second-hand book dealers who sold new books at discount as 'decoy ducks' to tempt buyers into their shops, compelling neighbouring booksellers to lower their own prices. ²⁹⁰ In addition, booksellers were threatened by the 'reprehensible practice' of publishers promoting their books directly to customers by post, bypassing the local bookseller altogether. ²⁹¹ Another contributor called 'A subscriber' suggested that publishers should offer enhanced trade terms on new books for a fixed period after publication. ²⁹²

More letters were published the following month along with recommendations formulated by *The Bookseller* in response to the opinions received. The first action should be the formation of trade associations across the country that reported to a committee in London:

Our recommendations, therefore, would be to organize an association of booksellers and stationers throughout the country – that a committee be formed in London, and that every town in the kingdom form others, who should periodically report to the London association – that each should meet quarterly, or oftener, for the purpose of deliberation and the promotion of unity. '293

²⁸⁷ BKS, February 1859, p.722.

²⁸⁸ BKS, March 1859, p.788.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ BKS, March 1859, pp.792-93.

²⁹¹ Ibid, p.792.

²⁹² Ibid, p.793.

²⁹³ BKS, April 1859, p.861.

Eventually, the committee could be split into two, to represent wholesalers and retailers, 'to draw up rules for the observance of the trade'.²⁹⁴ The main areas for discussion would be:

The principle of free trade in books, trade allowances, the retailers claim on the publisher for protection, the publishers' right to demand of the trade not to sell his publications under the fixed price, and questions of a like nature...²⁹⁵

Separate committees for retail and wholesale booksellers could form to 'draw up rules for the observance of the trade'.²⁹⁶ In addition, other matters such as the principles of free trade in books, trade allowances, booksellers' expectations of protection by publishers, and the guarantee by retailers not to undersell agreed prices could also be debated.

However, two months later, editorial exasperation at the lack of action was apparent.

The Bookseller had published many letters on the subject, aired many views and ideas, and offered its own considered recommendations. The time to talk had ended and the trade had to act:

The time has now arrived when something should be done if the evil be as great as it is represented, and we believe it to be; the question is one in which authors, publishers, and the retail trade are equally interested for a glance at the counters or shelves of the country trade will show that they will not keep books in stock which are published at a high price but confine themselves mostly to cheap reprints and branches of the business on which a profit is to be made.²⁹⁷

No more letters would be published. *The Bookseller* would 'take leave of the matter', although were any associations to be formed they would have its full support.²⁹⁸

Inevitably, underselling continued to be a central concern for *The Bookseller*, as it would be for the rest of the book trade, and the next batch of letters appeared just a few months later, in August 1859.²⁹⁹ Neither was this the last time that Whitaker's frustration became apparent at the unwillingness of the trade to cooperate and form the associations he believed

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ BKS, June 1859, p.1003.

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ BKS, August 1859, pp.1154-55.

they needed. The threat to disengage from the subject was repeated in August 1863, again in February 1864, and in October 1871.³⁰⁰

In 1864, in a renewed attempt to expedite action, *The Bookseller* submitted a proposition at the opening of the new season in October for improved terms for all those concerned, publishers, booksellers, authors, and the book-buying public alike. The plan was laid out in detail:

Publishers should issue their books at the lowest possible price to the public, looking for larger sales and eventually larger profits for themselves, and a larger rate of remuneration to authors than under the present system. The trade allowance we would restrict to two pence in the shilling, and under no circumstances whatever would we have odd books given in; but in order to place the country trade on the same footing as London, an allowance of ten per cent should be made to the wholesale houses who would serve as brokers and push the books amongst their trade customers.³⁰¹

Wholesalers should also absorb the carriage and postal costs, thereby ensuring that 'the bookseller in Durham or Exeter would thus be placed on the precisely the same footing as the largest retail buyer in London'. The advantages for booksellers were clear. Lower prices would attract customers and allow booksellers to insist on payment with 'ready money' or on settlement every quarter. Greater discounts for copies sold as remainders would be permitted only two years after publication to protect booksellers' sales.

To demonstrate how such a plan might work, a case study was presented from Macmillan and Co. An edition of the Globe Shakespeare published in one volume was the chance to put the ideas into practice, and *The Bookseller* published a letter that Macmillan wrote to booksellers to persuade them to accept a small trade allowance and sell the book at the advertised price of 3/6 without a discount. 304 The high quality of the production was emphasized as the rationale for refusing a discount. *The Bookseller* was 'quite sure' that

³⁰⁰ BKS, August 1863, p.487; February 1864, p.90; October 1871, p.809.

³⁰¹ *BKS*, October 1864, p.659.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., p.660.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.660.

lowering the price would not sell one more copy of such a book and trusted that no bookseller would 'throw away all the small allowance' by doing so.³⁰⁵ Two months later the journal reported that the whole first edition of twenty thousand copies had sold out; Macmillan's experiment had succeeded.³⁰⁶ Ten months later fifty thousand copies had been sold.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, despite this successful experiment there was still not enough consensus among booksellers or publishers to reform the underselling system.

The frustration at the resistance of booksellers to form the associations Whitaker believed were essential for securing these reforms did not hinder *The Bookseller*'s efforts to persuade readers of the need for one. In 1865 a serious effort, organised by Samuel Ives, Secretary of the Booksellers' Provident Institution, was announced.³⁰⁸ A committee would be formed of wholesale booksellers, authors, and publishers, as well as both country and London booksellers to consider 'some practical means of remedying the evils of underselling'.³⁰⁹ The committee would meet with an open mind to collect information about the workings of the present system and issue a report, along with suggestions that would be discussed at a meeting to which the entire trade would be invited.³¹⁰ *The Bookseller* abstained from judgement, but stated that any remedies must be agreed by the trade 'at large'.³¹¹ However, once again, despite further meetings and the creation of a six-point plan by the committee, six months later *The Bookseller* had to report that several leading members of the trade had withdrawn their names and the committee had concluded that the plan did not have enough support.³¹² Again, the book trade could not reach a consensus view of how to proceed. Other than sporadic notices of meetings of local associations in the provinces and overseas, and short-lived attempts by

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p.660. The Publishers' Circular printed a shorter note to the same effect on 1 November 1864, p.599.

³⁰⁶ BKS, December 1864, p.1085. The success of this edition was also noted in *PC*, 31 December 1864, p.887.

³⁰⁷ BKS, October 1865, p.651.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ BKS. October 1865, p.651 and p.769.

³¹⁰ *BKS*, October 1865, p.651.

³¹¹ Ibid

³¹² BKS, January 1866, p.8; April 1866, p.275 and 295; May 1866, p.479.

assistants to improve their conditions, the book trade continued without trade associations until 1890.³¹³

The Bookseller held its position on underselling and published articles and letters on the subject throughout the period. Much to the frustration of the editor, the limitations of a trade journal were clear. It had no power, merely influence. It could not force booksellers to cooperate, it could only inform and support them, and try to persuade them to act in their own best interests. Some of the reasons for the obduracy of the trade over underselling, gained only with the benefit of hindsight, are examined in Chapter Five.

From supply chain to trading community: the role of *The Bookseller* in developing a community identity

With the continued absence of a trade association or similar representative body, *The Bookseller* developed initiatives of its own to improve the business culture and encourage the raising of standards in working conditions. For instance, booksellers and assistants routinely worked long hours six days a week, but by the late 1850s many of the leading houses in the Row agreed to close at 2pm on Saturdays in the summer months. The start of the summer was even celebrated with a cricket match for assistants in Blackheath. Assistants in Edinburgh managed to persuade their employers to close at 7pm during the week and 4pm on Saturdays. However, mindful of the ramifications of disrupted deliveries to the country trade, *The Bookseller* advised booksellers to have their orders into the Row by Thursday, and that parcels for Saturday postings be ready by noon. Another idea came from an assistant who

³¹³ For instance, see *Bookseller*, June 1867, p.428 (Bradford); August 1867, p.611 (Bradford); September 1972, p.728 (assistants); October 1872, p.802-3 (Germany, Edinburgh, Holland); November 1872, p.916 (Holland); May 1873, p.371 (assistants); February 1874, p.87 (assistants club dissolved due to lack of cooperation).

³¹⁴ *BKS*, May 1859, p.924.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ BKS, August 1959, p.1151.

³¹⁷ BKS, May 1859, p.922.

wrote to suggest that, should the publication day for weekly periodicals move to Wednesday rather than Monday, the Saturday half day would be possible.³¹⁸ However, a decade later hours again lengthened: *The Bookseller* published letters from assistants who were expected to remain in the shop until 8pm on weekdays and 5pm on Saturdays.³¹⁹ Country assistants worked even harder than those in London, starting at 7.30 in the morning and working until 9 p.m. every day but Sunday.³²⁰

The Bookseller was responsive to the views of assistants but was not uncritical of them. While acknowledging that underselling and 'too keen competition' had whittled profits to the extent that assistants' wages were now too low to attract and keep the best candidates, there was a suspicion that they were not helping themselves. ³²¹ Not only were they not as knowledgeable about books as earlier generations had been, they were also less willing to devote themselves to self-improvement:

Without saying that as a whole the assistants are less intelligent than they were thirty or forty years ago, we may safely assert that they have not shown signs of improvement as may be seen in some other trades. Cannot the assistants project some plan for their own improvement?³²²

A riposte from 'An Assistant' was published the following month. The mental state of assistants would be greatly improved by working fewer hours and having more time to peruse the lists of new titles.³²³ Another explained that there were few opportunities for advancement as the long hours left them no time to study or read books in the evenings, and they worked too late to attend classes at Working Men's Colleges.³²⁴ Unconvinced, the editorial reply countered

³¹⁸ *BKS*, February 1860, p.96.

³¹⁹ BKS, July 1872, p.538; August 1872, p.618.

³²⁰ *BKS*, August 1872, p.618.

³²¹ BKS, October 1872, p.803.

³²² BKS, September 1872, p.728.

³²³ BKS, October 1872, p.802.

³²⁴ Ibid., pp.802-3.

that booksellers had always worked the same long hours but still managed to 'cultivate' their minds. 325 Good booksellers were responsible for their own self-improvement:

'Young men who really wish to improve themselves will find means to surmount the difficulties' [...] unless they do, there is not in them the stuff out of which good booksellers are formed'.³²⁶

Despite the editor's uncompromising stance, ideas for improvement in their conditions had been suggested over the years. Employers were encouraged to pay their staff weekly rather than monthly as many had families to feed and the frequency of months with five Sundays meant that they were forced to incur debts with moneylenders to survive to the next pay day. The Bookseller itself also offered discounted rates for those placing 'Situation Wanted' notices to help them find new jobs. 328

More serious ramifications of a poorly paid and under-trained junior workforce became clear in the 1870s. An initiative open to all British and Colonial-born booksellers and assistants was launched in 1870 by *The Bookseller* to improve booksellers' prospects and increase their bibliographic and literary knowledge. A first prize of 10 guineas was offered for the best essay on a 'Bibliographical List of Works Connected with Paper and other Materials for Writing and Printing, Printing and its Accessories, Bookbinding, Bookselling and Booksellers, and Literary History generally'. The judge was to be Henry Bohn, a noted bookseller with an 'unequalled' knowledge of bibliography. The prize was promoted for five months to maximise the number of entries. Eventually, a Mr Gee of Oxford was awarded the prize for providing a list of 880 works but, although *The Bookseller* agreed that 'the study of bibliography should be encouraged in every possible manner', the small number of entries

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³²⁵ Ibid., p.803.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ BKS, August 1866, p.724.

³²⁸ BKS, September 1861, p.520; August 1866, p.724.

³²⁹ BKS, January 1870, p.5; May 1870, p.399.

³³⁰ *BKS*, February 1870, p.91.

³³¹ BKS, May 1870, p.399.

made it questionable whether such prizes were the most effective method.³³² In what must have been a painful realisation for Whitaker, it appeared that the new generation of assistants did not have the same veneration for bibliographic knowledge as he had, and either did not appreciate its value or had no time to acquire it.

One of the reasons for the persistently low wages in bookselling was its continued lack of profitability. At a time when the book trade was described by *The Bookseller* as 'flourishing' with 'general prosperity' in every branch of the trade, 'unprecedented demand' for prayer books and church services, and the rise in exports, assistants in the country trade struggled on low pay of about 25s a week.³³³ A few years later a correspondent described the workforce as 'cheap labour, half-educated, half grown boys and girls who knew nothing about books, and little enough about anything else'.³³⁴ For many booksellers, stationery and fancy goods were more profitable; they could not afford to employ 'highly trained and efficient assistants' to spend hours hunting through catalogues in search of the details of a book to order, all for a 5% gross profit on the sale.³³⁵ The bookseller would be in the position of being 'out of pocket by the diligence of [his] assistant'.³³⁶ Others complained of the carelessness of assistants who told customers that a certain title was out of print rather than go to the bother of ordering it.³³⁷

Low pay also led to serious infractions such as stealing from employers. Second-hand booksellers had to entrust large sums of money to assistants to buy and collect new stock from dealers in their area. Reports were received of individuals who negotiated their own prices with suppliers and remitted lower sums to their employers, pocketing the difference themselves. 338

The Bookseller was concerned at the prevalence of these habits and that some of the assistants

³³² BKS, June 1870, p.486.

³³³ BKS, August 1872, p.613 and 618.

³³⁴ *BKS*, July 1885, p.650.

³³⁵ Ibid

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ *BKS*, November 1884, p.1173.

did not even consider their actions as dishonest.³³⁹ In a later article reporting on the same problem, the journal displayed a perhaps surprising sympathy towards the assistants, whose low wages made it impossible to 'resist the temptations that the collecting system daily puts in their way'.³⁴⁰

The Bookseller thought assistants should formulate plans for their own advancement, asking 'cannot the assistants project some plan for their own improvement?'. 341 Earlier calls for associations had failed but in the 1870s assistants themselves were 'waking up' to the fact that their hours were too long. 342 The Bookseller concurred and announced that 'a considerable number of assistants' had agreed to form an association 'for their mutual benefit and improvement'. 343 The same issue carried a letter from a colleague in Amsterdam who described the aims of their twelve-year old group which could act as a model:

The object [...] is the improvement of the member's knowledge as regards the book trade, its branches and literature in general; as well as the promotion of friendship among its members. This object is obtained by weekly meetings, when lectures on subjects relating to the book trade and literature are given.³⁴⁴

Whether coincidentally or not, a credible attempt was made by two hundred London assistants in early 1873. The association would be 'carried out and carried on' by the assistants themselves but with financial and other support from employers. Has were drawn up for a location that could offer affordable refreshments and accommodation for country members, plus a reference library, and a series of lectures and talks. A provisional committee was appointed. However, as had happened in 1865, *The Bookseller* announced in February 1874 that the committee had been dissolved 'owing to want of co-operation'. Once again it proved

³³⁹ BKS, May 1881, p.420.

³⁴⁰ *BKS*, November 1884, p.1173.

³⁴¹ *BKS*, September 1872, p.728.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ *BKS*, November 1872, p.911.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p.916.

³⁴⁵ *BKS*, February 1873, p.74.

³⁴⁶ BKS, May 1873, p.371.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ *BKS*, February 1874, p.87.

impossible to find enough common cause among booksellers for a much-needed cooperative venture to succeed.

Despite these repeated disappointments, *The Bookseller* displayed sympathy for and understanding of the financial precariousness that was so common in the book trade. The London trade's benevolent society, Booksellers' Provident Institution (BPI), had been established in 1837 by George Greenland, a bookseller in Aldersgate Street near Paternoster Row. Its supporters came from across the book and allied trades. Many of the leading houses joined as early members, such as Thomas and William Longman, John Murray, and William Pickering. Donations also came from printer William Clowes, papermakers John Dickinson and James Spicer, as well as from the proprietors of *The Times*, *The Athenaeum*, and *The Morning Chronicle*. In 1845, a retreat to provide residential care for elderly members was opened on a plot of land in Hertfordshire donated by Dickinson, and bequests continued to be received for the maintenance of the retreat and other activities of the Institution.

Based on an insurance scheme, members under thirty years old paid a life contribution of twenty guineas paid at a rate of two guineas a year in order to receive financial assistance or an annuity in later life for themselves and their family.³⁵² Older members paid higher rates on a sliding scale. The BPI was supported by both trade publications. They both featured regular accounts of the meetings but took different approaches to the organisation. *The Publishers' Circular* promoted its 'flourishing' financial condition and claimed to be astonished that more new members had not joined.³⁵³ *The Bookseller* concurred that it was a 'noble institution' but acknowledged that the organization itself was 'not in good odour'.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ Listed in the uncatalogued BPI list of members from 1837 held at Kings Langley. The BPI is now called the Book Trade Charity.

³⁵⁰ The Booksellers Provident Institution: Constitution, Rules, Bye-laws, List of Donors and Members, (London: Spottiswood and Company, 1906), p.11.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p.16. The land was donated in 1842, first stone laid 1845.

³⁵² Ibid., p.19.

³⁵³ PC, June 1859, p.253.

³⁵⁴ BKS, March 1859, p.789.

Not content with the current state of affairs, *The Bookseller* tried to understand the reasons. The organization was deemed to be well resourced and 'economically administered', and its funds were 'liberally dispensed'. The annual report in April 1859 showed a healthy balance of over £22,000 and claims of over £948 had been dispensed to 51 widows, orphans, booksellers and assistants over the course of 1858.³⁵⁵ The fault seemed to lie with the joining fee and the intrusive nature of the procedure for claiming relief. A publishing assistant wrote to explain. Not only was the lifetime contributory fee of 20 guineas high for an assistant receiving only £80 a year, but the assessment procedure was humiliating and intrusive, describing it as 'inquisitorial'.³⁵⁶ Families were quizzed by officials on their sources of income and of any savings or earning their spouse might have, and whether any children were old enough to work. The style of the applicants' furniture and 'mode of living' was noted and reported to the Relief Committee to assess their worthiness, leaving the families feeling that they were being spied upon.³⁵⁷ They wanted to join a system where their contribution granted them a right to claim assistance; they did not want to have to beg for it.³⁵⁸

William Sharp, former director of the Relief Committee, defended the process and pointed out that, as it was run by its own members, there were few benevolent societies that were as trusted as the BPI and that many booksellers had told him of their regret for not having joined when they fell on hard times. Having aired the complaints, *The Bookseller* agreed that these problems were in the past and that it was now up to the Committee to 'bestir itself and beat up for recruits' by persuading senior members of the trade to join as a sign of good faith. Having aired to the trade to join as a sign of good faith.

³⁵⁵ BKS, April 1859, p.862.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid

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³⁵⁹ BKS, May 1859, p.934.

³⁶⁰ BKS, May 1859, p.922.

In a further attempt to cultivate support, a two-page article presented the history of the organization which underlined the generosity of the terms of membership and addressed some of the younger members' concerns. For instance, it was explained that although the full subscription of twenty guineas would take years to accrue, a claim could be made after three years for those seeking temporary assistance and seven for permanent assistance or an annuity. Tables of figures of the income and expenditure had been compiled since its foundation to provide evidence of its financial health, as shown in Table 20, and 'to state in general the large amount of good that has been effected through its instrumentality'. 362

Year	Amount distributed in relief
1840-41	£121 10s 0d
1842	£128 13s 0d
1843	£193 10s 0d
1844	£125 19s 0d
1845	£161 16s 0d
1846	£287 5s 0d
1847	£262 15 4d
1848	£363 12s 0d
1849	£400 15s 4d
1850	£472 11s 0d
1851	£542 12s 4d
1852	£582 19s 8d
1853	£624 4s 6d
1854	£750 1s 4d
1855	£784 18s 0d
1856	£911 8s 8d
1857	£883 14s 8d
1858	£948 19s 3d

Table 20 Funds distributed by the Booksellers' Provident Institution 1840-58³⁶³

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³⁶¹ *BKS*, September 1859, p.1217.

³⁶² Ibid., p.1216-18.

³⁶³ *BKS*, September 1859, p.1217.

Demand had risen steadily from 1840, increasing by approximately 680% to 1858. Since 1840, a total of £5,928 12s 5d had been paid out in relief to members of which £948 19s 3d was distributed in 1858 alone. Prospective members were also shown the balance of the investment fund that made a healthy £22,791 14s.364

The main reason given for applying for relief was 'want of employment'. 365 The figures in Table 21 also demonstrate the importance of this relief, not only to the booksellers themselves but also to their families, with 45% of the funds granted to dependents for temporary assistance and 43% of those seeking permanent relief.

Temporary assistance	Amount
4 retail booksellers	£65 5s 0d
16 booksellers' assistants	£228 16s 0d
3 widows of retail booksellers	£43 7s 0d
11 widows of booksellers' assistants	£193 17s 0d
1 orphan child	£13 0s 0d
Total	£544 5s 0d
Permanent assistance or annuity	Amount
2 retail booksellers	£65 5s 0d
6 booksellers' assistants	£164 10s 11d
1 widow of a wholesale bookseller	£31 6s 8d
3 widows of retail booksellers	53 0s 0d
4 widows of booksellers' assistants	£91 10s 0d
Total	£404 14s 3d
Grand total granted	£948 19s 3d

Table 21 Funds distributed by the Booksellers' Provident Institution 1858³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

The report concluded by imploring all members to join what was a well-run, financially stable scheme that would provide generous relief for all its members should they suffer unforeseen 'calamities'.³⁶⁷

The Bookseller maintained its advocacy and support for the BPI but also recognised persistent difficulties in the recruitment of new members, particularly assistants. Displaying much sensitivity about a delicate matter, the journal was concerned that the low pay of assistants made the fee unaffordable. Acknowledging the fragility of assistants' financial health, the journal suggested that some might be ashamed and therefore unwilling to be questioned about their poverty, preferring to forgo the benefits than disclose their meagre means. Two more remedies were proposed: a lower fee for poorly paid assistants, and that employers financially support their employees' memberships of the institution. Neither of these suggestions was adopted.

By the 1870s, dwindling numbers of new members and a steady rise in applications for relief put pressure on the investment fund and appeals had to be made for the wealthier members of the trade to 'hold out a helping hand to their less fortunate brethren'. The arctic action was needed as there were only seven new members in 1872, four in 1873, and four in 1874. Several remedies were suggested, including an increase in the fees and a reduction in the amount of relief offered; it was pointed out that one widow on the list had received £652 over the years while her husband had only paid in the one-time fee of £21. The was also suggested that part of the problem was the lacklustre character of the managing committee. The Bookseller considered it out of touch; several members had not attended any meetings at all

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³⁶⁷ BKS, September 1859, p.1218.

³⁶⁸ *BKS*, January 1861, p.3.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ *BKS*, January 1861, p.3.

³⁷¹ BKS, December 1874, p.1103.

³⁷² *BKS*, February 1875, p.92.

³⁷³ *BKS*, pp.91-92.

recently and re-organisation was needed to 'bring it more into harmony with the requirements of the trade'. Tresh ideas were needed from the younger men 'who would better represent the continually altering state of the trade'. New directors were appointed and prospects did slowly improve, to the extent that ten years later in 1885 Queen Victoria donated £20 to the fund and agreed to become its patron. Despite the intransigence of the BPI and its resistance to reform, *The Bookseller* continued to support it because the benefits to its readers was undeniable even if they could not all afford them.

The Bookseller used its pages to support other initiatives for individuals in distress, such as subscriptions to raise funds to provide some financial security for widows and children, and bequests. Edward Moxon, publisher of many of the Romantic poets and one of the main undersellers in 1852, died in 1858, leaving his affairs in an 'embarrassed' state and necessitating the partial sale of the business to his creditors, Bradbury and Evans. Though the business continued trading after his death, the value of the family's share of the copyrights shrank and Mrs Moxon, the adopted daughter of Charles Lamb, became destitute some years later. Fortunately, Moxon's reputation and standing in the trade remained high and a subscription fund was launched. The fund was kept at a bank but was promoted by both *The Bookseller* and *The Publishers' Circular*. It was widely supported and attracted contributions from dozens of dignitaries, writers, booksellers, and publishers, including three guineas from Whitaker, £100 from Tennyson, and £75 from Queen Victoria. After only two months, nearly £600 had been collected for the family, as the summary in Fig. 22 shows:

³⁷⁴ *BKS*, p.92.

³⁷⁵ Ibid

³⁷⁶ BKS, November 1885, p.1192.

³⁷⁷ BKS, March 1874, p.209.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. A similar notice also appeared in *PC*, 2 March 1874, p.130.

³⁷⁹ BKS, May 1874, p.416.

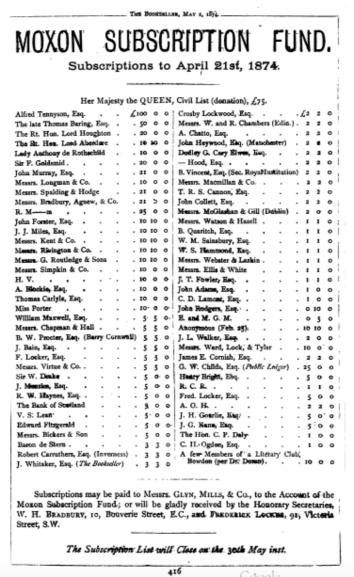


Fig.22 Moxon subscription fund³⁸⁰

Members of the book trade who had been more fortunate in business than Moxon left bequests to be invested for the welfare of their colleagues. James Figgis bequeathed £3000 to the Stationers Company to establish four pensions of £24 per year specifically for 'aged, sick or worn-out compositors'. Collections were also initiated to honour celebrated individuals who had made significant contributions to the book trade, such as John Francis of *The Athenaeum*, who was credited by *The Bookseller* as the person who was most responsible for ensuring the

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³⁸⁰ BKS, May 1874, p.416.

³⁸¹ BKS, July 1884, p.675.

removal of the taxes on knowledge decades earlier and the prosperity that followed.³⁸² A 'memorial charity' was established to honour his name and to create pensions to support eligible trade members.³⁸³ The list of subscribers was published to encourage others to contribute, and readers were told that if £1000 were to be collected, the fund would be able to set up two pensions.³⁸⁴ Whitaker himself donated five guineas.³⁸⁵

Concern and empathy for booksellers in distress extended to colleagues overseas. In a joint effort with Sampson Low, the Paris Booksellers' Relief Fund was launched for 'distressed brethren' in Paris who had been involved in the 1871 siege of the city. ³⁸⁶ £2000 was eventually raised from more than 156 members of the trade all over the country who contributed sums ranging from 2s from a Mr Davis in Exeter and 5s from 'Assistant, Reading' to £50 from printers W. Clowes and Sons. ³⁸⁷ Whitaker and Low later together undertook the journey to Paris to deliver the funds personally to the stricken booksellers.

The purpose of reporting these collective and individual philanthropic efforts was to reassure readers that there was welfare support and financial assistance should they need it, even for the poorest and least powerful members of the trade. Calamity could befall any of them and, as the example of Edward Moxon showed, even the most highly regarded might require financial support. By repeatedly highlighting the participation in these collective acts of charity, the journal could both acknowledge the financial precariousness of the bookselling trade and try to foster a sense of solidarity and demonstrating how, as a united body, colleagues could be supported. Despite these efforts, only in the 1890s did the book trade accept that cooperation and association was the only way to achieve the structural reforms they so clearly needed to the tackle damaging trade practices and improve the business culture.

³⁸² *BKS*, January 1884, p.5.

³⁸³ BKS, July 1884, p.675. See also January 1884, p.5; February 1884, p.90, March 1884, p.290.

³⁸⁴ *BKS*, March 1884, p.243.

³⁸⁵ *BKS*, February 1884, p.99.

³⁸⁶ BKS, March 1871, p.199.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.199-200.

Conclusion

The purpose of the trade journalism devised by Whitaker for *The Bookseller* was to provide a modernised information service for the benefit of the book trade, both booksellers and publishers. Better-informed booksellers would be more resilient and better able to withstand the challenges of trading in an unregulated commercial environment. In addition to the traditional book lists and advertisements of the older book trade publications, *The Bookseller* offered more news and commentary on topics of commercial interest to contextualise the economic, regulatory, and legislative conditions of bookselling so that readers might understand the structural forces acting on them. Statistics and other factual information were compiled and analysed to give them the opportunity to measure, observe, and track trends and perhaps devise strategies to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate against the risks.

Trade journalism did not offer its readers a definitive account of current events but instead captured the ebb and flow of business life in the book trade. The reporting gave readers an account of the latest news while the commentary and analysis put the events into context, and invited readers to engage with the issues. *The Bookseller* presented itself as an authority on trade issues but also as a forum for debate where opinions could be challenged and counterarguments presented. Whitaker wanted to do more than just provide information, he wanted his readers to participate in the matters that affected their trade and their businesses. The opinions expressed might be one-sided and self-serving, but contributors had their voices heard and exchanges of views added to the bank of trade knowledge. The shared knowledge helped readers understand the multi-faceted pressures and problems they all faced, and their ideas for solutions could be debated even if they were not adopted. What Whitaker really wanted from his readers was action, not just deliberation; but action required cooperation and collaboration.

Despite the success of *The Bookseller* as an information service, Whitaker's attempts to persuade booksellers to form trade associations failed. He knew that long-term prosperity for

booksellers lay in their willingness to work together, to reach consensus on matters of critical importance to their business, particularly the persistent problem of underselling. The mechanisms for the implementation of any reforms could be supplied only by a representative organisation but, despite his best efforts, the allure of discounting was too strong. Association had to wait until the cooperation of the publishers could be harnessed in the 1890s.

As the 'organ' of the book trade, *The Bookseller* was the keeper and storehouse of the book trade's history, its institutional memory bank, preserving the intimate details of the lives and tribulations of booksellers during a time of particular volatility. By collecting, organising, and preserving this information, *The Bookseller* became the unofficial administrative centre of an information system that provided the bureaucratic infrastructure that the trade associations utilised in the last decade of the century. *The Reference Catalogue*, the other key element of the information system, is examined in the next chapter, along with *Whitaker's Almanack* and the essential role *The Bookseller* played in the long road to cooperation in the 1890s.

Chapter Five Information services and information systems

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first two evaluate both of Whitaker's later publications that had the greatest impact on the Victorian book trade. Both were updated versions of familiar genres: Whitaker's Almanack refreshed the traditional almanack genre by organising factual and statistical information in an affordable edition, while The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature modernised the trade catalogue. The final section returns to The Bookseller and examines the role it played in the eventual successful attempt to organise the book trade as the twentieth century approached, vindicating Whitaker's conviction that the mechanisms of a trade association were essential to the effort of improving the business culture of bookselling.

Whitaker's Almanack made Whitaker a household name and secured his financial stability. It was a statistical annual intended for a general readership and displayed his trademark editorial methods of sourcing information from experts, and ensuring the content was accurate, and that it remained current by encouraging the participation of his readers. It was produced at an affordable price for wide distribution to non-elite readerships. The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature was a trade catalogue that, by binding together publishers' own current lists and adding an index, became the most comprehensive record and searchable repository then available of books in print. Together with The Bookseller, it was a key component of the rudimentary information system designed to improve efficiency in the bookselling supply chain and transformed inventory management for publishers and booksellers. Both titles were works of reference, informational texts characterised primarily by their utility. In the case of The Reference Catalogue, the cumulative indexes of the eight editions produced in the period to 1898 also became the foundations of a databank of

information that enabled Whitaker's heirs to develop a centralised bibliographic bureaucracy in the next century.

Whitaker's Almanack

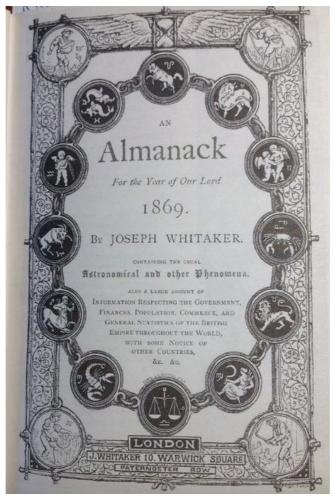


Fig.23 Whitaker's Almanack 1869

After a decade of single-minded commitment to *The Bookseller*, Whitaker turned his attention to pressing personal concerns amid increasing financial stresses. In 1862 the family had moved to Enfield, a town ten miles north of London. White Lodge was a suitable home for a successful businessman and was located in a town with gas-lit streetlighting, a weekly local newspaper, a cottage hospital, well-connected transport routes and a railway line into

the City.¹ The house was a substantial building with a library and several outbuildings including a stable and chaise house, a harness room, a knife room, and two 'surgeries'.² A summer-house in the garden was also included in the annual rent of £80.³ The size of Whitaker's household had expanded to include eleven children, seven girls and four boys, plus several servants, and he was increasingly anxious about how he was going to pay for the schooling of the 'quiverful'.⁴

Concerns about education added to existing problems in his marriage. In 1869 he petitioned for a judicial separation from Elizabeth after nearly fourteen years of marriage. Judicial separations were not common, but Whitaker feared for his own and his children's physical safety. The petition listed the accusations against his wife, including 'violent, insulting and indecent language' and acts of violence towards his adult daughters from his first marriage, twenty-two year old Anne Maria and twenty year old Jessie. Elizabeth had regularly hurled abusive language at him in front of the children, calling him 'a liar, a nasty and disgusting brute and beast'. She also hit him with a clenched hand, and had thrown a plate at his head, striking and cutting his cheek. He complained that she 'absented herself from my bed' for weeks without consent, disappeared from the house without his knowledge, and threatened to leave him altogether. Anxious that his 'proper influence and authority' would be damaged, he asked for full custody of all the children. The resolution of the

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¹ Cuthbert Whitaker, *An Illustrated Historical, Statistical and Topographical Account of the Urban District of Enfield* (London: Enfield Preservation Society, new edition, 1969), pp.84-85 and pp.90-91.

² TWA, White Lodge lease, pp.1-4. The house was bought outright for £1000 in 1875, see 'A History of White Lodge Surgery 1903-2003', p.2 (pdf downloaded from the White Lodge Surgery website but page no longer available online)

³ TWA, White Lodge lease, pp.1-4.

⁴ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.114.

⁵ TNA J77/90/1056 C607046 Joseph Whitaker Affidavit in support of the Petition for Judicial Separation, 12 February 1869.

⁶ Whitaker Affidavit, p.2.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p.3.

⁹ Ibid., pp.2-3.

dispute is not recorded but Whitaker remained married to Elizabeth and they had four more children over the next six years.¹⁰

These family difficulties prompted him to seek new sources of income. His son Cuthbert recounted the 'well-established tradition' that, while walking down the garden path, Whitaker remembered the 'commonplace book' of miscellaneous information he had compiled to help him answer readers' questions during his time at *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Once the plan was made, he worked 'continuously day and night' to organise the contents and prepare the book for publication. The first edition consisted of 367 pages of expertly-sourced information with an index that listed 1,100 entries. It was priced at 1s and was advertised as 'the most complete, the cheapest, and the best almanack every published in England'. To convince booksellers to order the new work, prospectuses were sent to local agents around the country and Whitaker promised that there would be 'a very large demand' for it. 14

'Almanack Day', the day that the Stationers' Company almanacks were published, was usually in late November, but *The Bookseller* reported that the Stationers had postponed publication until 10 December in order to include the names of the new Members of Parliament after the planned General Election. Whitaker announced that his own volume would be delayed a little longer, until 22 December 1868. He wanted to incorporate details not only of William Gladstone's new Cabinet and the principal offices of State but also the

¹⁰ The couple were not fully reconciled. Whitaker petitioned again for separation in 1876 but was refused and, although she was sometimes registered as living at other addresses, she remained his wife until his death.

¹¹ Cuthbert Whitaker, ASLIB, p.114.

¹² Ibid., p.115. Cuthbert states the volume had 363 pages but it was advertised as 367 pages.

¹³ 'Advertisement' for *Whitaker's Almanack*, *BKS*, October 1868, p.728. Whitaker offered no explanation for why he chose the older spelling for his title but both 'almanack' and 'almanac' were commonly used at this time.

¹⁴ 'Advertisement', p.721.

¹⁵ BKS, October 1868, p.706. see also *PC*, November 1868, p.697. The election was won by the Liberals, who benefitted from the expanded electorate after the 1867 Reform Act.

consequent changes to the Royal Household, and a large number of other official and legal appointments.¹⁶

Despite Whitaker's apparent confidence in his new publication, he was anxious about the considerable financial outlay to printers, paper merchants, and bookbinders on an untested title. Cuthbert Whitaker later reported that, even though the edition was fully subscribed by the time it was printed, his father could expect no income from sales until 'settling day' on 10 January 1869.¹⁷ Unashamedly using *The Bookseller* in the marketing efforts, the January issue sought to reassure any booksellers with lingering doubts by printing a column about the history and importance of almanacks in book trade history and a two-page advertisement that reproduced fifteen of the best reviews from the press. Most of them highlighted the comprehensiveness of the work and its relatively low price. For *The Manchester Guardian* it was 'a perfect prodigy of information', while *Notes and Queries* declared it 'a wonderful shilling's worth of information'. **In the City Press** summed up its appeal:

One of the most comprehensive almanacks we have ever seen, and we give it our hearty welcome. It is, indeed, a marvellous shilling's worth, and one that will commend itself to those who desire to see an improvement in year-books of this kind. It has, in addition to the ordinary contents of an almanack, several new and important features, including summaries of the public income and expenditure, the proceedings of Parliament during the last session, scientific discoveries and inventions of the year, statistics relating to trade, commerce, and finance, municipal, and local institutions etc. The volume – for such it really is – extends to 367 pages, and the value of the whole is much enhanced by a full and well executed index. ¹⁹

Whitaker could not have said it better himself; no bookseller reading these laudatory reviews would have been left unsure about the almanack's initial reception. The first printing of 40,000 copies was quickly sold and a reprint was ordered; by March the entire edition was

¹⁶ Advertisement for Whitaker's Almanack, BKS, December 1868, p.1008.

¹⁷ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.115.

¹⁸ BKS, January 1869, pp.32-33.

¹⁹ *BKS*, January 1869, p.3.

sold, setting the work up with 'a good name and a good market for succeeding years'.²⁰ The strong sales for the first edition enabled Whitaker to repay his printers and binders and find the financial relief he sought.²¹

If the new title was untested, the genre was not; almanacks were the most widely disseminated printed texts of the first half of the nineteenth century.²² A wide range of titles was available, ranging from penny sheets to single volumes costing 10s or more, but the role these works played in readers' lives was changing along with their content. Cheap newspapers now carried prognostications and, although astrological and prophetic almanacks were still popular in rural areas, their appeal was waning.²³ *Vox Stellarum*, also known as *Old Moore's*, had generated large profits for the Stationers Company earlier in the century but was now forced to lower its price from half-a-crown to sixpence and mocked for being reduced to carrying advertisements 'as if he were a Peer reduced to carry [an advertising] "board".²⁴

The change in the market for almanacks was especially marked after the 1860s.

Maureen Perkins suggests that the launch of *Whitaker's Almanack* created a new market for statistical almanacks and represented the 'final defeat' of astrological almanacks, but there had been many signs of such a shift before 1868 in both sheet and book formats. Part of Jill Allaway's research examines almanacks and year books published between 1790 and 1860 that printed little or no astrological data. Instead, these titles provided a wide range of content from practical information such as tide times, details of rates of tax and stamps, probates, and

²⁰ Cuthbert Whitaker, ASLIB, p.115.

²¹ A total sales figure of 60,000 copies is quoted by the *Whitaker's Almanack* website, http://whitakersalmanack.com/history/ [accessed in 2017 but the link is now broken and Bloomsbury has sold the title. Richmond Upon Thames Library Services has the same figure, probably from the same source, https://libraryblog.lbrut.org.uk/2017/12/whitakers/ [accessed 30 July 2021].

²² Louis James, *Print and the People 1819-1851* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p.53.

²³ Perkins, p.200 and p.198.

²⁴ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.554; *Athenaeum*, 11 December 1869, p.779.

²⁵ Perkins, p.12.

stocks, and local fair days to religious and didactic texts, and almanacks for entertainment and amusement. ²⁶ Professional almanacks served particular occupational groups such as the *Law Almanack* and the *Tradesman's and Mechanic's Almanack*, each providing specialist information. ²⁷ In addition, didactic and moralizing texts were published by reformers such as Charles Knight, publisher for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK). He produced pamphlets, books and tracts to dispel the ignorance and superstition he believed were perpetuated by the traditional almanacks with their 'absurdities and indecencies', and promoted knowledge 'substantiated by rational criteria' in works such as *The British Almanac* (1828). ²⁸

Whitaker would have known this market, not least thanks to the annual autumn display of notices and advertisements in *The Bookseller*. Titles to suit all budgets, tastes and requirements were announced for publication for 1869. Partridge and Co. offered illustrated penny almanacks 'intended to convey lessons of temperance, industry, economy and religion'. De La Rue's *Red-Letter Diaries* were noted for their elegance and the scientific and astronomical information they contained, and were available in a variety of sizes and format for the desks of ladies and gentleman, and offered in either Russia or morocco leather bindings.²⁹ Peacock, Mansfield, & Britton advertised a range of titles priced from 6d to 8s, as seen in Figure 24.

²⁶ Jill Allaway, *'Paper Ghosts': The Almanack and Year Book 1790-1860* (unpublished PhD thesis University of Huddersfield, 2004), pp.15-38.

²⁷ Allaway, pp.34-38.

²⁸ Charles Knight, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century with a Prelude of Early Reminiscences Volume 2* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864), pp.59-61.

²⁹ BKS, October 1868, p.803.



Fig.24 Advertisement for almanacks³⁰

The two titles that most closely resembled the contents of Whitaker's title were *The British Almanac* (1828) and *The Statesman's Yearbook* (1864). The former title and its accompanying *Companion*, compiled by Knight, was originally published by the SDUK in the belief that knowledge would steer the working classes away from more radical texts and convince them to accept the status quo.³¹ The volume produced for 1869 consisted of 96 pages of calendar information and details of hierarchies and political structures of the nation, plus an optional *Companion* of nearly 300 pages that provided general information on a range of subjects including mathematics and science, the nature of the political economy, new legislation, recent public improvements and a chronicle of the previous year. The main edition was an affordable one shilling but the *Companion* cost an additional half crown, or it could be bound together for four shillings.³² *The Statesman's Yearbook* was 800 pages long. Edited by Frederick Martin and published by Macmillan & Co, it was 'a statistical,

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³⁰ Ibid., p.727.

³¹ Perkins, p.64.

³² Advertisement for *The British Almanac and Companion 1868*, *BKS*, November 1868, p.855.

mercantile, and historical account of the civilised world'. ³³ Primarily intended for use by politicians, diplomats, and merchants, the title contained no calendar, and was expensive at 10/6 per copy. Consequently, initial sales were modest at 700 copies, rising to an annual sale of 2000 copies by 1878. ³⁴

Whitaker had greater ambitions for his title, both for the scope of the work and for its sales. As he had with *The Bookseller*, he saw a business opportunity in providing high quality information from expert sources for a new but growing part of the market. He wanted his almanack to appeal to a section of society that he believed was underserved by the existing publications, a market he understood well, lower middle-class men. The intended reader was a 'he', and the contents of the almanack reflected a masculine worldview with little that addressed typically female interests. The only acknowledgement of a female readership was found in the pages of advertisements at the end of the volume where a French fashion and pattern magazine was advertised along with the "Empress" sewing machine and the "Vowel washing machine".³⁵

Whitaker believed that this group of men were not able to access the right sort of information and that a 'large and daily increasing portion of the community' wanted 'some improvement' in what was available.³⁶ A preface for the 1877 edition identified this readership in more specific terms:

The Publisher will feel obliged by booksellers giving their attention to the circulation of this almanack amongst manufacturers, farmers, tradesmen, and the lower middle class generally.³⁷

In other words, the work was devised for men like himself, the serious-minded petite bourgeoisie. This group consisted of skilled manual workers, teachers and clerks,

³³ The Statesman's Year-Book, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1864), front page.

³⁴ SA.H. Steinberg, Statesman's Yearbook, 'Martin to Epstein', *Journal of Library History*, 1, 3 (July 1966), 153-66, (p.160).

³⁵ WA 1869, un-numbered advertisement section.

³⁶ 'Advertisement', WA 1870.

³⁷ Advertisement in *BKS*, December 1876, p.1164.

shopkeepers and operators of small, usually family-run, enterprises whose businesses and social lives were primarily focused on local or specific sectoral markets. According to Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhardt Haupt, lower middle-class men were generally family-orientated, independently-minded, and ambitious, but they were not a socially or economically coherent group and shared few common experiences. The group also included semi-skilled manual workers and large sections of factory and industrial workers and, while not a distinct social class, they nonetheless operated within a class society 'whose internal structure and power relations followed the structuring principles of wealth, qualifications and achievement'. 40

In many ways, this group encapsulated the qualities Samuel Smiles promoted in *Self-Help* (1859), praising those who were 'independent of thought, resolute in purpose, steadfast in life, and well-educated in action, conduct, self-culture and self-control'.⁴¹ Whitaker knew of Smiles' book as *The Bookseller* had lavished praise on it:

The general excellence of his book is so high... we should be glad to feel that every father in the land would present a copy of it to his son, or to each of his sons, upon the first day of this new year.⁴²

The new almanack was intended as a work of reference and was compiled in an easily searchable structured format. Where traditional almanacks had helped readers to organise their temporal and spiritual obligations, Whitaker's new volume would also help them to orient themselves in their social, political, and economic milieux. This group had benefitted from the expanding Victorian economy, and as their economic prosperity grew so did their political influence. Pressure mounted for electoral reform and in 1867 nearly a million urban male voters, about 35% of all men over twenty-one years old, met the qualifying conditions

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³⁸ Crossick and Haupt, p.136. See also Geoffery Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.14.

³⁹ Crossick and Haupt, p7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.9.

⁴¹ *BKS*, December 1859, p.1497.

⁴² Ibid.

under the new Reform Act and were enfranchised. Whitaker's Almanack was intended to democratize knowledge and provide these new voters with an overview of the British system of government, and facts and statistics about the economy, names and ranks of senior members of the government, the judiciary, the military, and educational and religious institutions to equip them for their role as progressive and informed members of the body politic.

In the absence of the business records, it is hard to know with any certainty whether the almanack was actually read in large numbers by the lower middle-class men whom Whitaker intended it for. Jonathan Rose's study of the intellectual habits of the working classes does not mention it, and it is similarly absent from Brad Beaven's research into leisure habits of working-class men. On the other hand, there are accounts of middle-class writers using it as a reference work: Samuel Butler was described as working with his copies of the almanack and *Bradshaw*. Many of the copies were likely to have been acquired by libraries and institutions, so Whitaker's young men might have accessed a copy in their local public library or in the libraries of a college or Mechanics' Institute. Whether the sales were institutional or individual, the publication quickly found a sizeable readership.

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⁴³ K Theodore Hoppen, 'The Franchise and Electoral Politics in England and Ireland 1832-1885', *History*, 70, 229 (1985), 202-17, (p.216). See also David Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom 1800-1906* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), p.339.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Brad Beaven, *Leisure Citizenship and Working-Class Men, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), and *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ Reference in Cambridge University archives, Butler Collection, I/Pictures/9, https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0275%2FButler%2FI%2FPictures%2F9 [accessed 24 November 2020].

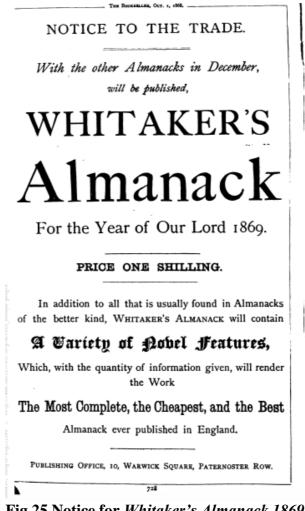


Fig.25 Notice for Whitaker's Almanack 1869

To attract these readers, the marketing strategy, as demonstrated in the announcement in Fig. 25, relied on several elements, the most obvious of which was price and value. Without qualification, it was announced as 'the most complete, the cheapest and the best almanack ever published in England'. 46 Priced at one shilling, it may not have really been the cheapest almanack ever published but it was priced to appeal to a wide readership and, at 367 pages long, it was good value. Whitaker also wagered on the familiarity of the genre and his reputation within the book trade. His name would reassure booksellers that the new almanack would be authoritative and accurate, and the word 'almanack' in the title would draw in the ordinary reader. Cuthbert Whitaker recounted that one of the first actions his father took was

⁴⁶ BKS, October 1868, p.728. Subsequent notices also used a shorter version, 'the best and most complete almanack every published in England'.

to ask the Astronomer Royal Sir George Airey for permission to use astronomical tables compiled by the Royal Observatory at Greenwich.⁴⁷ Airey wanted to popularize astronomy and appointed a junior astronomer to supply the information. However, there would be no astrology or prognostications, 'no attempt to peep into futurity'.⁴⁸ In Whitaker's view, those who traded in prophecies and predictions preyed on the gullibility and ignorance of the 'imperfectly educated class'.⁴⁹

Whitaker's Almanack was sold as 'a household book' that contained both traditional features and categories of factual information that were 'not hitherto easily obtainable'. ⁵⁰ It was a compendium of information for the ordinary reader that summarised the state and its main institutions - the structures of economic, social, and cultural power - that would give his readers access to the same knowledge already held by the most privileged and powerful Victorians. Table 22 presents a breakdown of the information grouped into seven broad categories. An index and 16 pages of advertising completed the volume.

Number of pages	Category (percentage of whole)	Sample content	
1 0			
57	Calendar and seasons	Law and university terms	
	(16%)	Christian year and special days by month	
		High water times around the coast	
		Eastern and Jewish calendars	
		Sportsmen's calendar	
		Meteorological readings from previous year	
		Seasonal barometer readings	
		The farm year and crop statistics	
115	The State and the	List of Kings and Queens	
	Establishment (31%)	Family of King George III	
		Members of the Royal Household	
		The Peerage	
		Members of the House of Lords	
		Members of the Commons	
		Government Offices	

⁴⁷ Cuthbert Whitaker, ASLIB, p.115.

⁴⁸ 'Advertisement', WA 1869.

^{49 &#}x27;Ibid.

^{50 &#}x27;Ibid.

		Changery and Courts
		Chancery and Courts
		Police and Prisons
		Statistics of criminal and civil law in England
		and Wales
		Army and Navy lists
		Established Church in England
		Free churches and religious sects
		Income and costs of diocese across England,
		Wales, and Ireland
		National income and expenditure 1867-68
		National debt
		Custom duties and property taxes
		Forests and land
		Merchant Navy
		Greenwich hospital
		Pauperism and poor rates
		Accidents in coal mines
		Civil list pensions
		Parliamentary summary 1868
		Law cases argued and determined 1867-68
		Table of income and wages calculations
		Table of meome and wages calculations
56	Finance and Commerce	Bank of England
	(16%)	Clearing and Joint stock banks
	(10,0)	Banks and bankers in London
		Country banks
		Statistics on traded commodities such as corn
		and tea, wine and spirits, textiles, chemicals,
		tobacco
		Imports and exports of merchandise
		Chambers of commerce
		Statistics on the rise of the railways
		Insurance companies and tables of probabilities
		of life
		City of London
36	Empire (10%)	British Empire in India
		British Possessions in the East
		Dominion of Canada
		British possessions in America
		British Possessions in Australasia
		British Possessions in West Indies
		British Possessions in Africa
		British Possessions in South Atlantic
		British Possessions in Europe
33	Foreign countries with	History and geography of each country, value of
	diplomatic relations (9%)	trade, names of members of government, name
		and salary of consul or ambassador
L		in a serial of the series of t

15	Education (4%)	Universities Colleges and schools Societies and institutions
30	Miscellaneous (8%)	Exchange tables currency Weights and measures Laws for Hackney carriages Excise, stamps and taxes Postal guides Scientific discoveries 1867-68 Significant obituaries in 1867-68
17	Index Advertisements (5%)	

Table 22 Categories of Whitaker's Almanack 1869

The largest category concerned the state of the United Kingdom and its institutions, what would now be recognized as 'the Establishment'. The nineteenth-century British state was decentralised compared to other European countries. It largely operated through civil organisations and local government, so the public servants and elected representatives who pulled the levers of national power would have been distant figures for most ordinary people. To familiarize readers with these people, more than a hundred pages were devoted to listing and naming, and ranking members of the Royal Family, the government of the day, the Peerage, officers of the Anglican Church and other sects and religions. Members of the upper ranks of the military and judiciary were also listed along with senior civil servants.

Much of this information was available in other publications such as *The British*Almanac but Whitaker's title also included additional details concerning the remuneration of public and elected officials and civil servants. At a time when 80% of the labour force were manual workers earning between £20 and £73 per year, and a comfortable middle class

 51 C. A. Bayly, \textit{The Birth of the Modern World}, 1780-1914 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p.257.

income was £400, these sums must have seemed extravagant.⁵² Heads of government departments, including the Prime Minister and Chief Lord of the Treasury, were paid up to £5000 a year, while top civil servants such as a permanent secretary earned half that much.⁵³ The salaries of mid-level civil servants such as the Chief Statistician at the Board of Trade and the Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum were set at familiar middle-class levels of £900 and £500 respectively. At the top of the scale, the Law Lords were paid significantly more than government ministers, an acknowledgement of the expertise required for the role and a recognition of the enduring importance of the rule of law in the national consciousness.⁵⁴

Although some of this information was publicly available for those who knew where to find it, verifying the figures was difficult for individuals. According to Cuthbert Whitaker, government departments were particularly reluctant to divulge the salaries of civil servants so initially Whitaker had to approximate them based on information in the Civil Service Estimates. The revelations were uncomfortable for some and resulted in complaints from two sides: those whose remuneration had been over-estimated complained that the tax authorities were bothering them, and those whose pay was under-estimated feared that the marriage prospects of their daughters would be compromised. Letters were received from disgruntled correspondents asking for corrections; for instance, John Hunter writing that the Bishopric of Newcastle was worth £4135 per annum not £3000. Whether Hunter was more concerned with pride or a desire for accuracy and accountability to parishioners was not

⁵² Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, p.63. According to Hoppen, agricultural and unskilled workers earned £20-41 per annum, lower skilled labour £46-52, and higher skilled workers £60-73; Simon Eliot, 'Never Mind the Value, What About the Price; Or, How Much did *Marmion* Cost St John Rivers', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 56, 2, (2001), 160-97, (p.165).

⁵³ WA 1869, p.94.

⁵⁴ The Lord High Chancellor of the High Court of Chancery received £10,000 compared to £5000 for William Gladstone for his service as Lord Commissioner of the Treasury.

⁵⁵ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.117.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ TWA, Letters to Whitaker. John Hunter, 16 February 1884.

recorded, but corrections were promised for the subsequent edition. The budgets for, and costs of, operating the military services were also listed, including pay scales for service personnel. Readers could note that while a Field Marshall might earn an unattainable £5999 per year, joining the army as a private in the Engineers would guarantee £25 a year, or £41 if they also had the skills of a blacksmith or saddler.⁵⁸

Ignorance of the workings of the state left most ordinary people ill-equipped for national politics. Demystifying the structures of national politics would inform and empower the newly enfranchised urban voters by letting them observe and appreciate its workings and by enabling them to identify themselves as part of the body politic. For many, political engagement was focused on their own communities, in local and municipal politics rather than on the machinery of national governance. ⁵⁹ The prevailing *laissez faire* ideology that underpinned the Victorian economy rested on the notion that everyone could make 'a fair and equal exchange' in a self-regulating market, but those without educational and financial resources were constrained by historical and institutional barriers as well as by social conventions that limited their opportunities. ⁶⁰ Seeing the incomes of administrators and public servants gave readers a yardstick by which their own financial situation could be measured, and reinforced the idea that public servants were employees of the state and in service to taxpayers and the electorate.

Similarly, an understanding of the national balance sheet - the calculation of the country's income and expenditure - was not just educational but contributed to the creation of an informed citizenry. Whitaker noted that the public's ignorance of this subject was not their fault but that of politicians who were not able to convey the central arguments of important

⁵⁸ WA 1869, pp.135-37.

⁵⁹ Crossick and Haupt, pp.126-32.

⁶⁰ Paul Johnson, *Making the Market: Victorian Origins of Corporate Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.32.

issues because of their own poor understanding of the country's finances. ⁶¹ Information and reports published by the government were 'simply unintelligible', so the almanack would provide explanatory notes to help 'unravel the mystery of the subject'. ⁶² The tables revealed that the nation's earnings were mostly derived from customs and excise, domestic taxation, and earnings from the post office and Crown lands. The primary expenses were for the Civil List, the military, the diplomatic and civil services, annuities and pensions, and the judicial system. ⁶³ The figures also confirmed the robust financial health of the nation and demonstrated that the country's sizeable financial commitments were both responsible and balanced by adequate revenues drawn from a variety of sources. For instance, the introduction to the entry on the national debt explained that the huge sums involved in keeping the ship of state afloat was a positive indication of the nation's wealth. A sense of national pride was evoked with the reassuring opening assertion:

If it be the privilege of great nations to be in debt, the United Kingdom has much to be proud of in that respect, standing at the head of all others in regard to its funded debt.⁶⁴

Although the national debt was described as an 'enormous incubus' and stood at over £741 million in 1868, it was distributed to a variety of financial instruments such as exchequer bonds, annuities, and debt owed to the Bank of England. Every Briton bore a share of the national debt of £25 15s 9d, but readers were assured that unlike the case for individuals, 'as a rule, the heavier the debt the more prosperous the kingdom', and that some of the benefits were to be seen in national projects such as the funding of the railway system. A historical note explained that the government had previously been funded by loans from rich merchants

⁶¹ WA 1869, p.113.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.120.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.122.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.121-22.

in the City of London who extracted privileges in exchange.⁶⁷ In contrast, the national debt was created by the issuing of bonds, freeing the government from the merchants' influence and rendering it more accountable to Parliament and to the electorate.

The source and driver of this financial activity was the most powerful capitalist economy in the world. In the mid-century, Britain was not only the workshop of the world but also its 'warehouse, banking hall, shipping agency, and insurance office'. 68 The country and its empire generated about a quarter of all world trade. ⁶⁹ To try to convey the scale and scope of the economy, current figures for the trade in the most important commodities such as corn and seed, tea, and sugar, were provided with explanatory comments. However, despite the largely positive picture of the economy, a note of caution was introduced in the analysis of the recent depression that followed the collapse of the bank Overend, Gurney & Co in 1867. The bank's failure had triggered a cascade of bankruptcies, including the collapse of other banks and limited companies, the loss of dividends and other earnings, and the ultimate crisis of confidence among investors in the robustness of the financial system.⁷⁰ The summary then suggested that the prospect for the coming year was likely to be better thanks to an anticipated excellent and early harvest. Although Whitaker's readers might not see any direct relation with the financial system or the economy in their own lives, they could appreciate its interdependent structure and how their own wages might be affected during depressions, and that bad harvests could raise the cost of food.

The extent to which ordinary readers were aware of Britain's foreign adventures and its role as an imperial power is disputed by historians such as Bernard Porter and Brad Beavan, but, however distant these places might have been, Whitaker provided his readers

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⁶⁷ Ibid., p.120.

⁶⁸ Anthony Howe, 'Britain and the World Economy', *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Chris Williams (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), pp.17-33, (p.25).

⁶⁹ Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886*, p.155.

⁷⁰ WA 1869, p.202.

with the basic facts about the rest of the world.⁷¹ Invoking Mark Twain's aphorism that God had created 'wars and other dreadful calamities' to teach men geography, he suggested that his countrymen's ignorance of the rest of the world was due less to providential theory and more to the difficulty of accessing the relevant information in a suitable format or a trusted source as 'familiar as a household word'.⁷² With the almanack, the readers could learn for themselves:

The present work [...] will enable our children to gather this knowledge for themselves; and that should another earthquake happen at Ecuador, or a tornado at Tobago, they, better than their elders, will know where those places are. ⁷³

The entries were presented without preamble or historical explanation. There was no attempt to contextualise or justify imperial power, and no jingoistic eulogizing of its benefits even though Britain was now the most powerful nation on earth. Starting with British India, its history, a breakdown of its finances, and the structures of governmental and administrative oversight were listed.⁷⁴ The names of officials were given, often with their salaries, along with details of the main trading commodities and the value of imports and exports. Similar details were given for a range of foreign countries.

Readers were addressed directly only in the 'advertisement' or preface of each edition to indicate the sections that had been revised or updated. New categories were introduced when required while other sections that 'had lost some of the freshness' were shortened or omitted, for instance the 'Key to the Calendar' was omitted after the 1873 edition.⁷⁵ 'Baronets of England, Scotland and Ireland' and 'Military Commanders of the Order of the Bath' were added to the 1871 edition, and the 'Astronomical' section was expanded in 1873

⁷¹ For instance, see Bernard Porter, *Britain, Europe and the World 1850-1982* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983) and Brad Beaven, *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁷² 'Advertisement', WA 1869.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, pp.270-311.

⁷⁵ 'Advertisement', WA 1871 and WA 1873.

after the request for more information about the movements of the planets and their effect on the earth.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the limitations of the pagination led to frustration as Whitaker was not always able to include desired new sections. In 1872 he complained that 'a List of Fairs' around the country would be a welcome addition but, as it would extend to twenty pages, up to fifty other entries would have to be excised.⁷⁷

As the pressure on space continued to grow, Cuthbert Whitaker recalled that his father formulated an ingenious resolution. By removing the 'Esq.' from the names of officials the equivalent of one word in every eight was saved. Eventually in 1878 a more drastic decision was taken that enabled the List of Fairs to be added. A second, enlarged edition was issued at two shillings that included the additional articles and expanded versions of other sections. The shilling edition contained the original, shorter versions. By the late 1890s there was enough material for specialist spin-off editions such as *Whitaker's Naval and Military Directory and Indian Army List* from 1898 and *Whitaker's Peerage* from 1907.

The advertisement was also used to acknowledge and thank the contributors on whom Whitaker relied for keeping the almanack accurate and up-to-date. Accuracy was assured by obtaining information from official and expert sources. In addition to the Royal Observatory, the Royal Mint was approached for entries on coinage, and details of the tax system came directly from the Inland Revenue. Sir Albert Woods, senior officer at the College of Arms and the heraldic authority who oversaw the honours system, was the source for the section on the Peerage and honours. In order to maintain the accuracy and currency of the information, Whitaker used a familiar strategy of welcoming contributions from readers. Many almanacks

⁷⁶ 'Advertisement', WA 1873.

⁷⁷ 'Advertisement', WA 1872.

⁷⁸ Cuthbert Whitaker, *ASLIB*, p.116.

⁷⁹ *BKS*, January 1878, p.32.

⁸⁰ TWA contains letters from Edward Rigg and A. G. Markes at the Royal Mint, and William Cockhill from the Revenue.

⁸¹ TWA, letter from A. Woods, Nov 1887.

routinely re-used much of the same information from year to year, but he repeatedly promised that his almanack would be revised and corrected where necessary: 'it is not intended that the work shall take a stereotyped form, and thus become, as it were, fossilized'. Each year several entries were earmarked for revision by obliging contributors. The text was cut and pasted onto a printed page with instructions to correct and return the entry to the offices:

While the Editor is determined to spare neither trouble nor expense in making the Almanack correct, it must be obvious that this can only be fully accomplished by the obliging cooperation of others; he, therefore, trusts that those gentlemen to whom proofs are sent, will be kind enough to revise and return the portion submitted to them - this being the only means by which perfect accuracy may be attained.⁸³

Some readers wrote to Whitaker to correct individual entries. Philip Witham sent a letter correcting the date of the establishment of the Dignity of Mowbray to 1283, not 1295. 84 R. G. Bevan wrote to correct the age at death of two peers, the Earls of Carnworth and Dalhousie. 85 He further noted that in both cases Debretts, the presumed source of the information, had incorrectly printed their dates of birth ten years too early. Correspondents were warmly thanked in each new edition and asked that corrections or revisions for the next edition be sent for inclusion by the middle of October. 86

The timing of the launch of the almanack in 1869 was fortuitous, and its success depended as much on good luck as clever publishing. A growing nationalism was evident across the world, not just in Britain but also in European countries such as Italy and Germany, which unified and reinforced their power by each expanding their empires into

^{82 &#}x27;Advertisement', WA 1869.

⁸³ TWA Letters. A leaflet folded into letter from the Duchess of Roxburghe with her entry as Mistress of the Robe at £500 per annum. The letter was dated 12 November but included no year. The offices were at 12 Warwick Lane so the date had to be after October 1869 when they moved to that address.

⁸⁴ TWA, Letters. Philip Witham letter 31 December 1883.

⁸⁵ TWA, Letters, R. G. Bevan, 27 December 1887.

⁸⁶ 'Advertisement', WA 1871. Despite this early announcement, letters show Whitaker was still collecting revisions and corrections into December in some years.

Africa and Asia. ⁸⁷ According to Bayly, nationalist sentiments are defined by comparison with 'others', people from different localities, political economies, and histories. ⁸⁸ Any Briton wanting to compare their country to another, to read about the extent of its influence, its history, political structures, and economic strengths, would find all they needed in *Whitaker's Almanack*.

'Whitakers', as it came to be known, became a trusted source of general and statistical information and a byword for authoritative knowledge. It reflected back to its readers a vision of a democratic, confident, stable and prosperous nation, but it did not address the underside of economic progress and little mention was made of the darker side of Victorian society and its social problems. Other than references to pauperism rates and the poor law, there were no statistics or commentary regarding problems that had been caused by rapid urbanization such as slum housing, nor any reports of the type Henry Mayhew had produced in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). Nor were there any indications of the exploitation taking place in colonial outposts and other foreign adventures. The vision of the country in the almanack was one of progress, ambition, and democratic legitimacy.

Whitaker's gamble to modernise the old almanack form succeeded and it soon became an icon of Victorian culture. Just ten years after its launch, it was chosen as one of the items to be entombed in the base of Cleopatra's Needle as a representative of Victorian social and cultural life along with, among other things, a copy of *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*, a portrait of the Queen, a complete set of British coinage, a map of London, and a selection of newspapers.⁸⁹ By the time the plinth was ready for the obelisk, the 1878 print run had sold out and Whitaker had to supply his own personal copy.⁹⁰ The additional material and

⁸⁷ Bayly, pp.199-203.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.204.

⁸⁹ The Times, 14 September 1878, p.10.

⁹⁰ Unsigned review of *Whitaker's Almanack* 1912, in *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, January 1912, 133, 1, 35-55, (p.36).

continued currency of the almanack meant that it could be re-purchased every year. Sales continued to grow: 150,000 copies were planned for the 1887 issue.⁹¹ By the end of the century, 'Whitakers' had become a symbol of the quintessentially Victorian desire for classification and order alongside *Bradshaw*, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861), and *A New English Dictionary* (first published in 1884 and later renamed *The Oxford English Dictionary*).

Of all his publications, the almanack was Whitaker's favourite. It symbolised the importance he placed on the organisation, systemisation, and dissemination of high-quality information and knowledge packaged in an affordable and accessible form for the ordinary reader. After he retired from editing *The Bookseller* in 1875, he devoted himself to producing the annual editions from his extensive library in Enfield. To ensure its continuation after his death he created a deed of settlement with £10,000 deposited into a trust, separating its copyright and accounts from the rest of the family business and from his personal estate. 92 His will had no mention of *The Bookseller*, the firm's other titles or the fate of the firm as a whole, and his sons had to borrow money to maintain the rest of the publishing list, including *The Bookseller*, after his death. 93 But the almanack was not his last publication and, having set it on its path, he returned to the concerns of the book trade.

The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature

In 1874, with *Whitaker's Almanack* established and his financial position strengthened by its success, Whitaker's focus returned to bookselling. His next project, *The Reference Catalogue* of *Current Literature*, was a trade catalogue compiled from the complete lists of books in

⁹¹ TWA, Letters. John Ogden, printer, 14 and 16 December 1886, with an estimate for the first printing of 150,000 copies.

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⁹² TWA, Minutes Book 1941, p.3.

⁹³ Ibid.

print supplied by mainly English and Scottish publishers with additional contributions from a handful of foreign firms. It required the cooperation of publishers for the common good. However, although planned as a definitive guide to books in print, Whitaker was frustrated by the unwillingness of some publishers to submit their catalogues. Despite these absences, the eight editions published between 1874 and 1898 were the most comprehensive repositories of information about books in print available, and were accessible to even the smallest or most far-flung bookseller. By the early twentieth century, the index Whitaker created for the catalogue had become the book trade's principal bibliographic reference work.

Trade catalogues were central to Victorian bookselling but they were not new.

Andrew Maunsell's *The Catalogue of English Printed Books*, first published in 1595, was described as being as essential for the bookseller as 'the Apothecarie his *Dispensatorium*, or the Schoole-master his *Dictionarie*'. 94 A later successor, *The English Catalogue*, was published by Sampson Low from 1864. This was a cumulative list of new books published from 1835 but, as it was a retrospective catalogue, some of the information it contained was out of date by the 1870s. *The English Catalogue* was the result of an amalgamation of Low's own *The British Catalogue* and *The London Catalogue*, which had been originated by William Bent in 1805 and recently acquired by Edward Tucker, Whitaker's proprietor. 95

The disadvantage of *The English Catalogue*, as *The Bookseller* pointed out, was that any adjustments to book prices made post-publication were not recorded, leaving booksellers exposed to accusations of cheating or of being 'grossly ignorant of his business' if the original and now incorrect price was quoted. ⁹⁶ Its usefulness was further limited by customers having to collect each volume as it was produced to complete the set. On the eve of the publication of his own trade catalogue, Whitaker shared his views about the

⁹⁴ Andrew Maunsell, *The Catalogue of English Printed Books, Part One* (London, 1595), Preface to the trade.

⁹⁵ The reason for the sale to Low is not clear.

⁹⁶ BKS, February 1874, p.87.

inadequacy of Low's effort in *The Times*, stating that the most recent edition, published in 1873, was already 'two years behind the time'. ⁹⁷ Whitaker's improved trade catalogue would provide a complete list of all the books, new and already published, that were available for sale, including all the information about prices and formats that a bookseller would need.

The concept behind the new catalogue was outlined in *The Bookseller* as a service for booksellers and libraries:

It is now proposed to collect in One Volume the Retail Catalogue of all Publishers, so as to form a BOOKSELLERS' REFERENCE CATALOGUE OF CURRENT LITERATURE, and by binding it in an attractive manner, make it an ornament for the bookseller's counter [...] It is probable that there will also be a demand for the Volume from public and private libraries. 98

Comprehensiveness would be a key element and, for the usefulness of the catalogue to be fully realised, contributions from all publishers were required. As part of the pre-publication marketing effort, *The Bookseller* reported that booksellers had complained about the difficulties finding information about books, especially by newer writers, and that 'a great and not altogether unreasonable outcry has been raised as to the want of information respecting modern books'. The information booksellers needed, the size, format, and price, were more easily found for classic works than for books by modern writers:

It is said that if we want to know about Burmann's *Ovid* or Hamilton's *Vases*, the sizes and other particulars are more readily available than that of the number of volumes, size, and price of recent editions of Dickens, Thackeray, Mommsen's *Rome* [...] while is it next to impossible to learn all that one wants to know about Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies* and its continuations and supplements. ¹⁰⁰

In fact, this information could be found in individual publishers' catalogues as well as in the trade press but, as claimed in an advertisement for the 1875 edition of *The Reference*Catalogue, these publications were ephemeral, treated as 'wastepaper and destroyed' and

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⁹⁷ Whitaker, letter to *The Times*, 27 February 1874, p.12.

⁹⁸ BKS, February 1874, p.179.

⁹⁹ BKS, February 1874, p.87. This rationale was repeated in the preface to the 1874 edition of *The Reference Catalogue*.

¹⁰⁰ BKS, February 1874, p.87.

were only rarely preserved for future reference.¹⁰¹ Catalogues could also be misplaced, thrown away or lost in the post. Booksellers overseas who relied on supplies of English books were particularly vulnerable to lost or delayed catalogues. An Australian bookseller later wrote to *The Bookseller* to highlight the problem: 'the loss or non-delivery of a publisher's list means great inconvenience for 4½ months till it can be replaced'.¹⁰² As demand for books increased, booksellers risked losing sales if they could not find the information they needed to meet their customers' demands. Whether by accident or misfortune, Whitaker's claim was that booksellers were too often left without a convenient repository of current bibliographic information when they most needed it.¹⁰³

The inspiration for *The Reference Catalogue* came from America. Frederick

Leypoldt, publisher of the American book trade journal *Publishers' Weekly*, had been frustrated at the difficulty of finding the latest sales information for new books. He had trained as a bookseller in Stuttgart and wanted to replicate the German system of collecting and organising trade information in the American book trade. Since the mid-sixteenth century, the Borsenverein collected details of all new books published across all the German states, privately or by licence, in the *Mess Katalog*, the fair catalogue, which was published twice a year in Frankfurt. Leypoldt aimed to provide a similar information service for an even more geographically, culturally, and linguistically dispersed American trade by launching *Publishers' Weekly* in 1872 and the catalogue *The Uniform Trade List Annual* in 1873. 105

¹⁰¹ BKS, June 1875, p.543.

¹⁰² BKS, July 1877, p.587.

¹⁰³ *BKS*, February 1874, p.179.

¹⁰⁴ LeRoy Harold Linder, *The Rise of the Current Complete National Bibliography* (New York, The Scarecrow Press, 1959), p.43.

¹⁰⁵ The catalogue was also referred to as *The Publishers' Trade-List Annual*.

Leypoldt's plan was ingeniously simple; he would arrange publishers' own current trade lists printed in a standardised and uniform format into alphabetical order and bind them together in one volume. Whitaker immediately realised its appeal:

The "Uniform Trade List" [sic] was, to me, a work of great interest...The unobtrusive simplicity of the plan was no inconsiderable merit; the book required no pushing; it told its own tale, and its usefulness was apparent to all. 106

Whitaker's copy may have been sent by his son Vernon, who was in America working for George W. Childs, publisher of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* and the *American Literary Gazette*, one of the forerunners of *Publishers' Weekly*. Whitaker senior quickly saw both its potential for the British trade and a way of improving it. Where Leypoldt allowed some catalogues to list the trade prices, Whitaker instructed his publishers to supply their catalogues with retail prices only so booksellers could share it with their customers: 108

It frequently happens that a customer is undecided in his choice, or really has no knowledge of the books he wishes to present or purchase; he may then take the catalogue home to select at leisure or consult some friend. 109

Trade prices agreed between publisher and bookseller were considered commercially sensitive and it was inappropriate and unprofessional for customers to see them. In addition, Whitaker created an index to highlight the most important titles. Initially something of an afterthought, the index would later become one of the most important features of his catalogue:

Originally the intention was to prefix a few pages indicating the general contents of the volume, and in whose lists books of a particular character might be found.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ 'Advertisement', *The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature* 1874. In the 'Advertisement' to the first Reference Catalogue, Whitaker called the catalogue *The Uniform Trade List Annual* even though Hruschka and the obituary for Leypoldt in *Publishers' Weekly* refers to it as *The Publishers' Trade-List Annual*. *Publishers' Weekly*, 5 April 1884, p.438.

¹⁰⁷ Obituary of Joseph Vernon Whitaker in *The Athenaeum*, 19 January 1895, p.87.

¹⁰⁸ Some British publishers also produced catalogue with trade prices, see letter to *BKS*, July 1877, p.586. ¹⁰⁹ *BKS*. February 1874, p.87.

¹¹⁰ For instance, see the letter to *The Bookseller* grumbling about the use of postcards sent to booksellers with visible price lists, November 1870, p.924.

¹¹¹ The Reference Catalogue (hereafter RCCL) 1874, p.1.

By contrast, Leypoldt's 'Index of Specialities represented in the Annual' classified titles only by subject, listing the publishers whose titles fell into each section, for instance 'Arts and Sciences', 'Educational', 'Freemasonary', and 'Novels'. The indexes produced for *The English Catalogue* were even less useful as they were published separately and at a different time to the companion volume, and did not even cover the same date range. For instance, the index for the second volume listed books published between 1856 and 1875 rather than the 1863-71 date range covered by the catalogue itself.

For his own volume, Whitaker realised that booksellers needed 'a ready guide' to help search the 3,200 pages to identify the book they wanted from among the 50,000 other titles in the catalogue:

Without a general index [the catalogue] would be deprived of half its value as a *Reference Catalogue of Current Literature*. I therefore determined to furnish an Index as [sic] should include all the chief books, and all the collections; in some instances under the names of authors, but generally under the subjects¹¹³

The index listed alphabetically the short title for each book along with the name of the publisher and page number in the publisher's catalogue where the long title and other sales information were printed. To maximise its effectiveness, the most important titles were listed several times: by title, by author name, and by subject heading. Books on the same subject and with similar titles but produced by different publishers were listed together, clearly marked with the corresponding page number of the publisher's catalogue, as shown in Fig. 26:

^{112 &#}x27;Index of Specialities represented in the Annual', *The Uniform Trade List Annual*, 1873.

¹¹³ *RCCL 1874*, p.2.

Abyssinia, Adventures in Isbister	II
Bruce's Travels in Black	9
-Blanc Smith & El.	
- British Expedition, Hozier Macmillan	16
- Expedition, Markham Macmillan	23
- Geography and Zoology Macmillan	4
- Nile Tributaries of Macmillan	2
Record of Expedition to Harrison	13
Three Years in Murray	25

Fig.26 Titles listed in The Reference Catalogue of Literature 1874

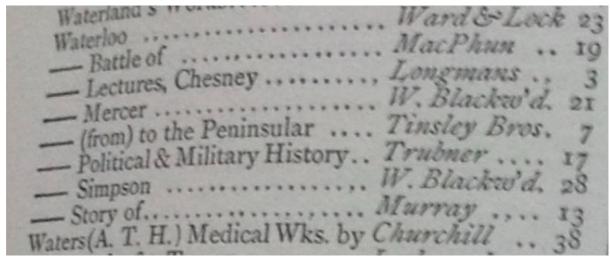


Fig.27 'Waterloo' in The Reference Catalogue of Literature 1874

Fig. 27 shows the results of a search for books about the Battle of Waterloo, itemising eight separate editions. These additional features were designed to save booksellers' time so that 'the slightest clue to the title, the author, or the subject will suffice to lead to the discovery of the book required'. The subject index contained similar categories as those in *The Bookseller*: for instance, 'Arithmetic', 'Law' and 'Music'. More narrowly defined sections were created when necessary such as 'Mushrooms', 'Pulpit Discourses', and 'The Queen's English' for the 1875 edition. The benefit of this cross-referencing feature was reiterated in later editions:

¹¹⁴ RCCL 1885, p.1.

¹¹⁵ RCCL 1875. There were no page numbers in the index. Each publishers' catalogue had its own numbered pages.

To experts this fullness of the lists may appear uncalled for, but it has the advantage of enabling those who possess a very slight acquaintance with literature to find without difficulty a book on any subject or by any author which they require, if it is contained in one of the lists contributed to the *Reference Catalogue*. 116

Whitaker's original ambition for the index was modest; its primary purpose was convenience and practicality. In a later edition he stated that 'it makes no pretensions to bibliographical excellence, its aim is simply to be useful'. Nonetheless, it became increasingly important as the number of titles increased in each edition. By 1898, nearly 100,000 titles were listed in an index that was itself nearly 600 pages long. Table 23 shows the expansion of the catalogue over the eight editions, with the index growing more than 600% in terms both of the number of titles listed and the pages required.

Year	Titles listed in index	Page extent of index
1874	14,000	approx. 82 pages (not paginated)
1875	17,000	approx. 100 pages (not paginated)
1877	32,000	203 pages
1880	35,000	234 pages
1885	53,000	317 pages
1889	68,000	404 pages
1894	87,000	514 pages
1898	99,000	576 pages

Table 23 Titles in the index of *The Reference Catalogue*

In later editions, additional lists were supplied to help booksellers, particularly those who might not have been well-trained in literary matters or who had recently joined the book trade. The 1877 edition had a list of pen-names and initials used by contemporary English and American writers with now familiar names such as Charlotte Bronte's 'Currer Bell' and 'George Eliot', who was listed as both 'Mary A. Evans' and 'Mrs G. H. Lewes'. There were

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¹¹⁶ RCCL 1889, p.1.

¹¹⁷ RCCL 1880, p.1.

also less well-known pseudonyms of distinguished writers such as 'An Invalid' used by Harriet Martineau for *Life in the Sick Room* (1844), and 'Knickerbocker' for Washington Irving's *History of New York* (1809). The names of authors of works that were originally published anonymously, many of them women, appeared at the end. Many of the names are now forgotten but among the notable ones were Mrs Gaskell for *Mary Barton* and Harriet Beecher Stowe for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 119

The production of each edition of *The Reference Catalogue* took months of preparation as each index had to be created anew. The original documentation regarding the process has not been found, but instructions for the 1889 edition was recorded in *The Bookseller*. Publishers were asked to submit two copies of the catalogues in proof or in manuscript by May 1888 so the titles and corresponding page numbers for the index could be extracted. ¹²⁰ Technical instructions for printing were also given: the catalogues were to be printed in demy 8vo on thin white paper, and 'delivered cold-pressed, but not cut'. ¹²¹ Final copies of the catalogue had to be received by September 1888 for binding. The 1889 edition was finally published nine months later in June 1889; a month after that all 4,000 copies had sold out. ¹²² The undertaking was expensive. The 1889 edition was sold to subscribers for 7/6 but the production costs were claimed to be 'not less than two guineas per copy'. ¹²³ *The Reference Catalogue* may have cost Whitaker more than it earned him but being the provider of this service, from which both publishers and booksellers benefitted, reinforced his position at the centre of the trade's information system.

Whitaker's idea struck a chord with publishers and the majority of them, characterised as 'nearly all the publishers in the United Kingdom', cooperated and agreed to produce their

¹¹⁸ *RCCL 1877*, pp.ix-xv.

¹¹⁹ RCCL 1877, p.xv.

¹²⁰ *BKS*, March 1888, p.306.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² BKS, June 1889, p.591; July 1889, p.679.

¹²³ BKS, July 1889, p.679.

current catalogues for the first edition.¹²⁴ Publishers' confidence in the project was indicated by the considerable cost incurred by printing the special copies, a sum that Whitaker claimed collectively amounted to nearly £2000.¹²⁵ The response from booksellers was also positive. The original print run had to be increased and additional copies of catalogues were requested from publishers to meet the higher-than-expected demand.¹²⁶

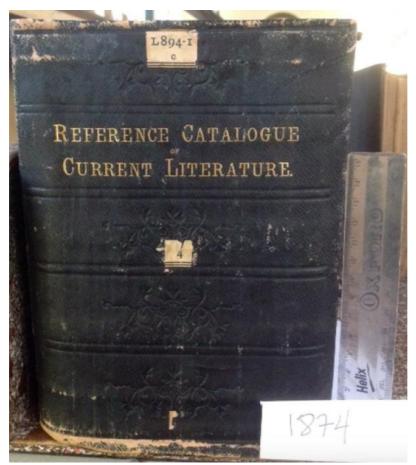


Fig.28. The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature 1874

The publication of the first edition of *The Reference Catalogue* in July 1874 was, among other things, a triumph of the binder's skill. It contained 103 publishers' catalogues and 45 advertisements representing 'all the Trade, with very few exceptions', and was bound with 'a special, strong' binding to enable the book 'to open freely'. ¹²⁷ At 3,200 pages long, it

¹²⁴ *BKS*, February 1874, p.87.

¹²⁵ Whitaker, letter to *The Times*, 27 February 1874, p.12.

¹²⁶ BKS, March 1874, p.207.

¹²⁷ BKS, July 1874, p. 547.

weighed 7lb and measured over six inches across the spine. *The Bookseller* declared it to be 'the fattest octavo volume ever published'. ¹²⁸ Approximately fifty thousand books were included with their full titles, author's names, format and prices, plus an index of fourteen thousand titles. The price was 2/6 for the London trade with an additional 3d for carriage costs to the country trade. The price was kept low to encourage wide distribution of the catalogue and fulfil Whitaker's obligations to the publishers' considerable investment in the project. His own stake was protected by the insistence that the entire printing of four thousand copies was pre-ordered before publication, and that the cash price was remitted at the time of ordering. ¹²⁹ Once published, multiple copies were acquired by booksellers of all sizes, not just to 'a few large wholesale dealers but to more than a thousand booksellers in all parts of the world'. ¹³⁰ Members of the book-buying public interested in seeing it could do so through their bookseller. ¹³¹

Despite Whitaker's confidence that there was a demand for the catalogue, its success was not guaranteed, and he had to defend it in *The Times* even before publication. A correspondent dubbed the uniformity of the catalogue 'a monstrous bulk, deformed, deprived of light' and suggested that all the information required by the book trade and by students of literature was already available in *The Publishers' Circular*, *The Bookseller*, and *The English Catalogue*. He further asked:

What bookseller with his own handy catalogue of, say, 40 pages of well-selected books would think of asking a customer to look through a volume of some 2,500 [sic] pages?¹³²

The goodwill and participation of the book trade was essential for the catalogue's success, so a forceful defence was required to maintain its credibility in their eyes. Whitaker's response

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ BKS, March 1874, p.264; July 1874, p.547.

¹³⁰ BKS, July 1874, p.547.

¹³¹ Ibid

¹³² George Birdwood, letter to *The Times*, 20 February 1874, p.10.

did not disguise his indignation at the criticism and he accused the correspondent of 'failing to master the very elements of the subject [of bibliography]'. He pointed out that publishers, 'hard-headed men of business', had already backed the project and that early demand from booksellers meant that 'not a copy will remain unsold a week after publication'. He also outlined the catalogue's main features, that it would contain up-to-date information and an extensive index, and that it could be used by literary men to determine book titles already in use to avoid the accidental misuse of similar titles.

A notice in *The Times* a month after publication would have reassured him. The reviewer judged that the difficulties and frustrations of finding information about new books was now in the past and described the index as 'a masterlock by which to unlock the several well-assorted storehouses included within the walls of his covers'. The merits of the publication were evident and the review concluded with Whitaker's own words for Leypoldt's work:

The unobtrusive simplicity of the plan is no inconsiderable merit. The book requires no 'pushing', and its usefulness is apparent to all. 134

Whitaker had originally planned to produce the catalogue annually but too many publishers baulked at repeating the exercise so quickly. The second edition, in 1875, contained seventy fewer contributions with some of the leading houses, such as William Blackwood, David Nutt, and John Murray, absent from the list. In total eighty-five of the original contributors withheld their catalogues, but Whitaker managed to persuade fifteen new recruits, bringing the total to eighty-seven. Reasons for the absences were not given, but numbers rose again in 1877 with most of the leading publishers, including Blackwood, Nutt, Murray, and even Sampson Low, now evidently persuaded of the efficacy of inclusion.

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¹³³ Whitaker, letter to *The Times*, 27 February 1974, p.12.

¹³⁴ *The Times*, 11 August 1874, p.3.

Persuading publishers to supply their catalogues required continued reminders. The letters pages of *The Bookseller* were deployed for this purpose with praise from a variety of booksellers:

If it cost £1 we would not hesitate in having it as it fills up a gap in our catalogues, and enables us to refer instantly to any list we require to show a customer. 135

Educational institutions far from London found it particularly useful:

I live in a small town in the country, and my only chance of becoming acquainted with new publications, or of comparing sizes, scope, and prices of different works upon any subject, is by means of catalogues or advertisements, but chiefly the former. *The Reference Catalogue* stands on my bookshelves and is consulted frequently...If we want a book we turn to the subject required in the index and then hunt out the particulars of the different works in the catalogues of their respective publishers.¹³⁶

Robert Bowes of Macmillan and Co. in Cambridge lamented that only one law publisher had contributed to the 1875 edition, and pointed out the competitive advantage of those who were included:

As *The Reference Catalogue* will become more used, any publisher who chooses to keep out of it will suffer by doing so, and any competitor in the same line will gain a corresponding advantage. ¹³⁷

A letter from H. T. Cooke was printed to remind publishers of the importance of participation: 'it is of the utmost importance to the trade that the book should contain the catalogues of all publishers'. Another bookseller, who highlighted the difficulty of collecting and binding publishers' catalogues of differing sizes, wrote that *The Reference Catalogue* 'had become a necessity of [his] business'. ¹³⁹ Echoing Whitaker's own concerns, bookseller Thomas Bosworth wrote to say that he found the catalogue 'almost indispensable' to his business but it had to be comprehensive, that 'incompleteness in such a work is a great

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¹³⁵ BKS. December 1875, p.1169.

¹³⁶ BKS, January 1876, p.5.

¹³⁷ BKS, July 1877, p.586.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

drawback'. ¹⁴⁰ The strategy worked, and although absences remained, numbers of publishers' catalogues increased in most editions, assuring its usefulness as a booksellers' guide. In 1889, *The Library*, the official journal of The Bibliographical Society, described it as 'one of the most useful among the working books of reference'. ¹⁴¹

Although the numbers of contributions fluctuated, and despite Whitaker's ambitions for a definitive collection of information about books available for sale, *The Reference Catalogue* was never fully comprehensive. Table 24 shows the breakdown of the participation of publishers.

Year	Catalogues	Advertisements	Totals
1874	103	45	148
1875	63	24	87
1877	101	41	142
1880	86	38	124
1885	113	18	131
1889	109	13	132
1894	137	17	154
1898	140	13	153

Table 24 Catalogues and advertisements in The Reference Catalogue 1874-1898

Some publishers were never persuaded. Three notable firms, described by Mumby and Norrie as 'established', never contributed: Scottish publishers Oliver and Boyd, legal specialists

Sweet and Maxwell, and Bailliere, publishers of medical texts. 142 Even once the catalogue was a regular feature of book trade life there were notable absences among some of the newer firms who may have felt their lists were unlikely to be sold through the bookselling networks.

These included J. M. Dent, whose early lists produced cheap reprints for a working-class

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.500.

¹⁴¹ The Library, 1, 1 (1889), p. 245.

¹⁴² F. A. Mumby and Ian Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, revised fifth edition (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), p.258.

readership, and John Lane and Elkin Mathews' The Bodley Head which published primarily poetry at this time. Nonetheless, the steadily increasing numbers ensured the credibility, and therefore viability, of Whitaker's catalogue.

Although not complete, booksellers now had their own personal copy of the largest collection of current bibliographic and sales information that had ever been available to the English trades. Inside, the layout of the catalogues was simple and utilitarian, and structured to be easily navigable. Titles were usually arranged alphabetically by title, by author, or by series, with some titles appearing in several categories. Publishers with larger lists such as Cassell, Petter and Galpin & Co. also listed books under broad subject categories such as 'Illustrated Works', 'Children's Books', 'Educational Works', and 'Serial Publications'. W. and R. Chambers included an index to assist booksellers hunting for titles in categories such as 'Arithmetical Text Books, 'English Grammars', and 'School Registers'. Others suggested lists of books suitable as school prizes, as gifts or as birthday books.

Publishers with popular authors displayed the full range of editions produced for a range of customers' budgets. Charles Dickens' publishers, Chapman and Hall, devoted five entire pages to their famous author. A customer seeking a copy of *David Copperfield* could choose between the uniform 'Original Edition' in demy 8vo with forty illustrations and priced at a guinea per volume; the smaller 'Library Edition' in post 8vo illustrated for 16s for two volumes; the 'Charles Dickens Edition' with only eight illustrations but priced at £3 9s 6d for 21 volumes or 3/6 each; or the 'Household Edition', bound cloth for 4s or paper for 3s but including 60 illustrations. This edition was marketed as one that the publishers intended to have the widest sale, and that with this edition would 'place the works of the most popular British author of the present day in the hands of all English readers'. 146

¹⁴³ RCCL 1880.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Wells Gardner, Darnton & Co 1880 catalogue, p.22 1880; Griffin and Farran 1880 catalogue, p.8.

¹⁴⁶ RCCL 1880.

The ability to review this range and volume of information offered booksellers the opportunity to engage in market research, enabling them to advise customers of the most suitable titles for their needs. The other source of bibliographic information, *The English Catalogue*, had developed out of older catalogues as a record of publishers' output and was not optimised for the requirements of modern booksellers. Although a particular title could be searched and its price noted, booksellers could not easily judge between similar types of books from different publishers, nor compare the value for money or suitability of rival dictionaries, grammars and copy books, sermons and tracts, or the attractiveness of school prize books and travel guides. Subscribers to *The Reference Catalogue* had physical and visual evidence of this literary and bibliographical cornucopia sitting on their shop counter.

Any bookseller with the space to collect and store all eight editions could not have failed to note the rapid growth of book production over these years. A visual comparison of the 1874 and 1898 editions illustrates the point. Fig. 29 illustrates the physical broadening of the catalogue needed to accommodate publishers' expanding lists, from six inches in 1874 to a foot in width twenty years later. For instance, Chatto & Windus's catalogue expanded from 40 pages to 65 between 1874 and 1885. In 1875, Ward, Lock and Tyler's catalogue extended to 64 pages but, by 1894 it was over 200 pages long and included a 28-page index of its own. Although there were only two more contributors than the first edition in 1874, the 1898 edition had an index of 100,000 titles, and the finished version was so large that it had to be split into two volumes.

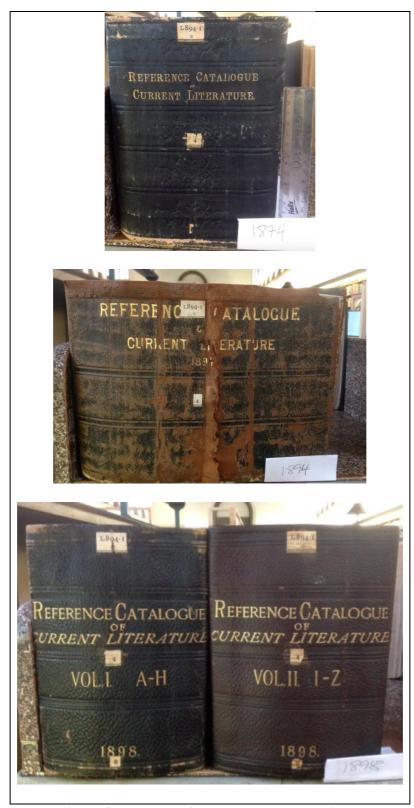


Fig.29 The Reference Catalogue 1874, 1894, and 1898

Despite their limitations as historical sources due to their incompleteness, the eight editions have preserved valuable information about the Victorian book trade and the range of books available for sale. Book historians such as Simon Eliot and William St Clair have raised concerns over the likely under-counting of published titles in the Victorian period, especially for cheap books. These low-priced books were less likely to have been preserved in libraries and institutions and therefore not enumerated in union catalogues or surveys such the Nineteenth Century Short-Title Catalogue (NSTC), but large numbers of them are listed in *The Reference Catalogue*. Tabulating the titles in each of the publishers' catalogues was far too large an undertaking for the current project, but they suggest that a far greater understanding of the reading choices available to Victorian readers is possible. In the meantime, analysis of the editions reveals some of the marketing strategies used by publishers and indicates changes in the commercial topography of the Victorian book trade.

The contributing publishers ranged from established 'list' or general publishers offering a wide range of works of literature, history, travel and belles-lettres, to those who specialised in books of educational, religious, and technical subjects. The individual catalogues varied in size from a few dozen pages to a hundred or more. Publishers with very small lists supplied single-page advertisements. Having sold his publishing business to George Bell in 1864, book trade veteran Henry Bohn (1796-1884) submitted a full-page advertisement in 1877 and 1880 to promote *Gordon's Pinetum*, a reissued title for which he had compiled an index in fifteen languages and published under his own name. ¹⁴⁸ Specialists in other kinds of printed works such as maps and atlases were represented by George Phillip, and stationery and sheet music by Burnes and Oates. Booksellers hoping for a wide

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¹⁴⁷ Nor were they likely to have been included in the book lists in *The Publishers' Circular* and *The Bookseller*. This point is also made by William St Clair, 'Following up *The Reading Nation'*, *CHBB6*, p.715. ¹⁴⁸ *RCCL 1877* and *1880*.

distribution also occasionally promoted locally produced books such as Eton bookseller R. Ingleton Drake offering Eton College Press educational titles from 1889 to 1898.

In total, 354 firms provided their catalogues or advertisements over the eight editions. The average number of contributions per edition was 134 but this figure belies the outlier year in 1875 when only 87 publishers cooperated. The fluctuating numbers suggest a high rate of attrition or 'churn' of publishers' catalogues. The motivations for each publisher's decision are not discernible from these figures but could have included issues of costs or the timing of producing their catalogues, while others may have been able to use direct methods of selling their books outside the bookselling trade. Established religious societies like SDUK had a captive audience and their own networks for distribution, but others, including the Society for Protection of Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society, saw the benefit of the broader reach that bookselling networks promised. Table 25 shows the frequency of publishers' participation in the catalogue.

Frequency of participation	Number of publishers	Percentage of total appearances
1-2	196	55%
3-4	78	22%
5-7	57	16%
8	23	7%

Table 25 Frequency of publishers' participation in The Reference Catalogue 1874-98

Only 23 publishers or 7% were present in all eight editions. It is no surprise that these were mostly prominent houses and included familiar names such as John Murray, Macmillan & Co, George Bell, William Collins, and W. and R. Chambers. Of the rest, 55% or 196 firms appeared only once or twice, 22% three or four times, and 16% between five and seven times. Even regular contributors missed some years. For instance, having signed up each time from 1874, Richard Bentley and Sons was absent from the 1885 edition but reappeared in the

following three editions. ¹⁴⁹ Similarly, T. and T. Clark, an Edinburgh-based theological publisher, otherwise a consistent contributor, was absent from the 1875 and 1885 issues. The absences could indicate a change in business ownership and offer clues to the legacies of publishers' copyrights. For instance, Edmonston and Douglas appeared in the first two editions and ceased after the death of Alexander Edmonston in 1877, after which his partner David Douglas continued the business under his own name and participated in five of the next six editions. The death of medical publisher Robert Hardwicke in 1875 led to the return of a name familiar to the book trade, David Bogue. His father, also David Bogue, had made his name reissuing inexpensive copies of classic books but died in 1856. Bogue junior bought the Hardwicke business in 1876 and continued it as Hardwicke and Bogue before announcing a new business name and address in 1880: ¹⁵⁰

NOTICE

MR. DAVID BOGUE has removed the business, which after the decease of Mr. Hardwicke he carried on at 192, Piccadilly, under the style of HARDWICKE AND BOGUE, to more commodious premises at No. 3, St. Martin's Place, Trafalgar Square, W.C.

The business is now continued in the name of Mr. David Bogue only.

Fig.30 Note in David Bogue's catalogue 1880

The catalogue continued to grow and by 1932, three volumes and two feet of shelving were required to accommodate them. Whitaker's heirs, now trading as J. Whitaker & Sons and known as 'Whitakers', decided to stop binding the individual catalogues and instead expanded the index alone, transforming it into the first comprehensive list of books in print in

¹⁴⁹ Bentley's were absent from the 1898 edition having been dissolved the same year.

¹⁵⁰ BKS, February 1876, p.90.

¹⁵¹ Shane O'Neill, 'Bibliographic publishers: Historic pioneers, contemporary innovators', *Logos*, 5, 2 (1994), 76-84, (pp.79-80).

the world. It was renamed *British Books in Print* in 1961. In 1978, after the adoption of Standard Book Numbers (SBNs) and International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) and computerised stock control, the records were transferred to microfiche and published monthly. From 1988, the publication was renamed *Whitaker's Books in Print*.

The firm's role as the *de facto*, if self-appointed, guardian of book trade bibliography led to their involvement in several key developments. Whitakers acted as the distribution agents for the British National Bibliography and assisted their efforts to create a bibliographic service designed for libraries in 1950.¹⁵³ Of perhaps even greater significance to the current book trade, Whitakers also played a key role in the developments of the international numbering system (ISBN) in the 1970s. As computerisation spread, albeit unevenly, to the book trade's warehouses, the need for standardised identifiers across the global book and library trades became urgent. The centuries-old bibliographic methods of identifying individual editions were no longer adequate; computers demanded machine-readable standardised systems using numbers rather than words. According to David Whitaker, British publishers did not immediately appreciate the need for books to have a unique identifying number until W. H. Smith began to computerise their warehouse in 1965. 154 On behalf of Whitakers, the Council of British National Bibliography, and the Publishers Association, David Whitaker wrote the rule book for the Standard Book Numbering Agency in 1967. 155 Together with Daniel Melcher, the inheritor of Frederick Leypoldt's business in America now called R. R. Bowker, the two publishers of book trade news and sales data became the official agencies for ISBNs in their two countries in 1969. 156 Although still not digitalised

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¹⁵² One Hundred Years of Bookselling and the Bookseller's Association (London: J. Whitaker and Sons Ltd, 1995), p.20.

¹⁵³ According to David Whitaker, Whitakers' offices at 6 Bedford Square backed onto British Museum property and books could be conveyed clandestinely into the back to be processed without leaving the museum's jurisdiction, see interview with David Whitaker, 2012.

¹⁵⁴ O'Neill, p.81.

¹⁵⁵ Hans Jurgen Ehlers, 'Thirty Years of ISBNs: The Multiple Parenthood of a Success Story', *Logos*, 11, 1, (2000), 25-27, (p.26).

¹⁵⁶ O'Neill, p.81. The ISBN agencies are now represented in the UK by Nielsen UK and in America by Bowker.

itself, traces of Whitaker's catalogue remain at the heart of the most important information systems underpinning the operations of the domestic and international book trade. Its DNA lives on in the services now administered by the global data service company, Nielsen Book UK, such as BookData, a database of published works and latest iteration of *The Reference Catalogue*, and the UK's ISBN agency.¹⁵⁷

By the end if the nineteenth century the book trade could communicate and exchange information and had access to a wealth of sales data in *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue*, as well as in *The Publishers' Circular* and other publications. Nonetheless, and despite increased production of books, many bookselling businesses struggled to remain viable and publishers worried that their distribution networks were at risk. The long-standing problems created by the 'free trade in books', the lack of trade-wide conventions, and the increased competition that resulted could no longer be ignored. The need for trade organisation, and the mechanisms such organisations could provide to negotiate trading standards and agreements that balanced the needs of publishers and those of booksellers, became acute. Whitaker's wish that the book trade form national associations to resolve their differences was finally realised, but not until the year of his death in 1895.

The Bookseller and trade organisation

By the last decade of the century, there were signs that the book trade was ready to make some of the changes to their businesses practices that *The Bookseller* had campaigned for since 1858. The final section of this chapter will focus on three of these signs. The first was a successful challenge to a proposed rise in railway freight costs undertaken by both publishers

¹⁵⁷ Nielsen Book UK, then called VNU Business Media, acquired *Whitaker's Books in Print* in 1999 from Whitakers along with its range of bibliographic services.

¹⁵⁸ The last volume of *The English Catalogue* was published in 1882 after which the *RCCL* was the only comprehensive bibliographic source.

and booksellers, followed by the publication in *The Bookseller* of a practical and viable plan for book pricing as an alternative to underselling. The third indicator was the formation of a new booksellers' association, the London Booksellers' Society (LBS), with the intention of providing the mechanism and authority to negotiate with publishers to implement reforms to outdated business practices. With each of these three developments, *The Bookseller* reversed its previous arms-length involvement in trade business and operated not only as the reporter of events but also as a participant. The following analysis examines these developments in the light of the trading conditions of the time and evaluates the role of *The Bookseller*, now acknowledged as 'the organ of the book trade', in the outcomes.¹⁵⁹

Changes were also afoot in Whitaker's own business. In 1875 editorial responsibility for *The Bookseller* was transferred to his eldest son, Vernon Whitaker, who had been recently recalled from America when his father accepted that he needed more assistance. While retaining oversight and overall control of the company, Whitaker senior now focused his own editorial concerns on *Whitaker's Almanack* while his sons became more involved in the rest of the business. In July 1887, the firm started to style itself J. Whitaker & Sons. ¹⁶⁰ The new editorial team faced many of the same reporting frustrations as their father, particularly regarding the protection of slim profit margins within the trade. The growth in production of low-priced books after the mid-1870s only exacerbated the difficulties for many booksellers as the availability of large volumes of cheap literature attracted new kinds of retailers, such as department and cooperative stores, intensifying the competition and forcing retail prices ever lower.

As the final decade of the century began, readers of *The Bookseller* would have noted how economic forces prompted businesses to seek protection where possible. Some firms

¹⁵⁹ PC, 15 March 1890, p.318.

¹⁶⁰ BKS, July 1887, back page.

such as Chapman and Hall and William Collins had already become limited companies and were now joined by others such as George Routledge and paper makers Spicer Brothers. ¹⁶¹

An alternative protective strategy was to gain advantage of size; in August 1889 a merger of the three main London wholesalers was announced as 'a great amalgamation'. The new firm, Simpkin Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co. Limited, was greeted positively by *The Bookseller*, who concluded that its 'vast resources' and 'administrative economies' would mean additional advantages for its trade customers. ¹⁶² Publishers also joined forces: the merger of Trübner & Co, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., and George Redway was announced in December 1889, followed by the takeover of Rivingtons by Longmans in June 1890. ¹⁶³

Lacking the same financial resources as publishers and papermakers to gain from similar actions, retail booksellers remained vulnerable. High-class booksellers that stocked a range of books in a variety of editions and bindings, and on whom publishers relied to sell their more expensive titles, had to compete with increasing numbers of discounters. *The Bookseller* also received complaints that cooperative societies like the Army and Navy Stores and department stores such as Harrods received preferential terms from publishers, which enabled them to undercut booksellers and advertise books with a discount of 3d in the shilling or 25% off the published price. Some correspondents even started to worry that discounts of 4d in the shilling were inevitable. Publishers were under pressure from authors demanding a fairer return for their copyrights, from rising wages in the printing, paper, and binding trades, as well as from booksellers demanding greater trade discounts.

¹⁶¹ RCCL 1885, 'List of Contributors and Advertisers' (Chapman and Hall and William Collins); BKS, November 1889, p.1201 (Routledge); December 1889, p.1357 (Spicers).

¹⁶² BKS, August 1889, p.771.

¹⁶³ BKS, December 1889, p.1356; June 1890, p.577.

¹⁶⁴ BKS, November 1884, p.1179. For more concerns about the 25% discount level, see Frederick Macmillan in *The Net Book Agreement 1899 and The Book War of 1906-1908* (privately printed, 1924), p.4; R. J. Taraporevala, *Competition and its Control in the British Book Trade 1850-1939* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Ltd, 1973), p.22.

¹⁶⁵ BKS, June 1889, p.559.

¹⁶⁶ The Bookseller had warned of the dangers of increased wages for printers in May 1872, p.364.

Until the mid-1890s and the loss of the three-decker format, publishers could perhaps afford to be less concerned than booksellers about discounting, as significant proportions of their cheap editions and educational books were sold at trade prices to wholesalers and bulk buyers like W. H. Smith's, or to school boards, while their more expensive editions would be sold to libraries like Mudie's. Publishers' lack of concern for retail booksellers was already known, and their attitude to underselling, at least as represented in *The Publishers' Circular*, was clear from their response to the last concerted attempt to form a booksellers' association thirty years earlier. As noted earlier, it was reported in *The Publishers' Circular* that publishers did recognise that the difficulties of booksellers were regrettable, and did sympathise with them, but did not see the likelihood of a solution:

We feel every desire to render all the assistance in our power; but we cannot hide from ourselves the fear that alleviation is beyond the power of any combination of the trade.¹⁶⁷

Booksellers could expect little assistance from publishers; any support they did receive was to appear in the pages of *The Bookseller*, not in *The Publishers' Circular*.

Readers of *The Bookseller* could have no doubt that booksellers were struggling, especially those outside London. A series of letters initiated by 'Devonia', a correspondent whose shop was 250 miles from London, illustrated many of the problems. He had detected a desire among booksellers to help each other and thought that divulging the costs of doing business would help others understand the practical and economic difficulties of bookselling. He calculated that the costs of running his own business were 18% of his revenues. In response, a firm from Lancashire declared theirs were 15%, while a London bookseller, who had the advantage of receiving and selling much of his stock without incurring carriage costs, disclosed that his expenses were 8%. He

¹⁶⁷ PC, 1 November 1865, p.603.

¹⁶⁸ BKS, June 1891, p.534.

¹⁶⁹ BKS, July 1891, pp.638-39.

As previously noted, threats to booksellers' profits were not restricted to prices and discounting, and *The Bookseller* continued to report on a range of concerns such as the question of who bore the financial responsibility for replacing imperfect or damaged copies, and how to dissuade customers from ordering their books directly from London booksellers offering better discounts.¹⁷⁰ New problems arose with the growth of free libraries and whether they should be considered trade customers supplied by wholesalers or retail customers for booksellers.¹⁷¹ *The Bookseller* thought local booksellers should supply local libraries but that a tribunal was needed to prevent publishers and wholesalers from supplying these potential customers themselves.¹⁷² However, without a mechanism with which to negotiate such an agreement, the journal had to admit that any resolution was unlikely, as 'how such a tribunal could be brought into existence is a most perplexing problem'.¹⁷³ It was later suggested that a letter be forwarded to publishers by a group of unnamed 'influential' booksellers but with no apparent result.¹⁷⁴

However, a threat emerged in 1889 that galvanised the whole trade against a common enemy and against which *The Bookseller* took an active and leading role. The costs of carriage and postage were already a concern for booksellers, especially for the country trade, so *The Bookseller* warned that the railway companies had proposed to the Board of Trade revisions to their classifications and rates for freight.¹⁷⁵ Books and stationery had been classified as 'third class merchandise' but books were to be separated and moved to the fourth class, thereby incurring an additional 25% cost.¹⁷⁶ Unbound printed matter would move from the second to the third class, again incurring higher charges.¹⁷⁷ Country

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¹⁷⁰ BKS, August 1889, p.773; June 1891, p.534.

¹⁷¹ *BKS*, September 1889, p.887.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ BKS, October 1889, p.987. If the letter was indeed sent there was no response to it in the January or February 1890 issues.

¹⁷⁵ BKS, March 1889, p.225.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ BKS, March 1889, p.225.

booksellers would have to order, and pay charges for, smaller separate parcels. In addition, small parcels would now be subject to tonnage weights, and any weighing less than 560lbs would be charged at any rate the companies wanted. As the book trade was largely already unable to benefit from such a heavy limit of 500lbs, *The Bookseller* thought the proposal an 'entirely mistaken policy' and that the arbitrary changes would further damage small and provincial traders who relied on small but regular parcels. 179

A large group of publishers and wholesalers quickly met to formulate a response, particularly about the re-classification of small parcels. 180 This was important as most parcels sent to booksellers and stationers weighed far less than 500lbs. The Railway Rates

Committee was based at *The Bookseller* office with John Murray as the chair and Vernon Whitaker as honorary secretary. 181 Despite the involvement of publishers, *The Bookseller* insisted that booksellers not rely on publishers' efforts alone. They had to 'bestir' themselves and challenge the railway companies themselves by submitting 'substantial arguments' with details about the damage inflicted to their businesses by the new rates. 182 A counterproposal was formulated and sent to the London Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, as well as to the Board of Trade. 183 The forceful intervention of a unified book trade was successful, and by the end of the year *The Bookseller* reported that nearly all of the trade's demands were accepted, in effect reversing most of the proposed changes. 184 This small victory did not solve all problems regarding carriage costs but it did demonstrate to the book trade that they had common interests that could be successfully addressed through collective action. 185

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 560lbs is over 226kg.

¹⁷⁹ BKS, March 1889, p.225.

¹⁸⁰ BKS, March 1890, p.243.

¹⁸¹ BKS, April 1889, p.331.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.335.

¹⁸⁴ BKS, December 1889, p.1356.

¹⁸⁵ For instance, a complaint about high carriage charges due to additional pages of advertising appeared in the January 1891 issue, p.7.

The second sign of a shift in trade attitudes appeared a few months later when Frederick Macmillan published a letter in *The Bookseller* that would test the trade's newly found willingness to collaborate. ¹⁸⁶ An inflection point had finally been reached in the long struggle to find an alternative to the discount system and its abuses. Macmillan's letter, headed 'A Remedy for Underselling', proposed two options as he thought it unlikely that all parties would agree to a single solution. New books should be divided into two classes: those to be sold 'net', and 'subject' books that would be sold with a discount decided by the retailer as usual. ¹⁸⁷ Net books would be sold at a fixed retail price with no discounts, with the net price set at lower levels than previously to compensate for the lack of customer discount. Booksellers would be offered a reasonable trade allowance to ensure a modest profit per copy sold. The scheme would not be compulsory and booksellers who wanted to sell with discounts could continue to do so.

The Bookseller's view was that, despite the large number of suggestions and proposals previously received, some of them similar to Macmillan's, this one was the first time a publisher had been prepared to act on and put 'theory into experiment'. This was not strictly true: as noted in Chapter 4, Macmillan had published the Shakespeare Globe in 1864 on similar terms. Nonetheless, the experiment was encouraged on two conditions: first, that enough booksellers across the country endorsed the scheme by filling and returning the comment slips supplied in the current issue; and secondly, that a sufficient number of publishers agreed to revise their terms of trade. The bookselling community was asked for their views:

¹⁸⁶ BKS, March 1890, p.244.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.241.

¹⁸⁹ BKS, October 1864, p.660.

¹⁹⁰ BKS, March 1890, p.241.

We impress on our readers the imperative necessity, we might almost say the duty, of filling in and returning the slips, whether their answers be favourable to the proposition or the reverse. ¹⁹¹

The column ended with a call to action: 'the time has now come when booksellers if they are in earnest may take action'. 192

Macmillan's proposal provoked interest inside and outside the book trade, but reactions were initially reported as being largely unfavourable. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, looking for a newsworthy story, had sent a journalist to interview publishers and booksellers to gauge their views, a selection of which were reprinted in *The Publishers' Circular*. Among the dozen booksellers surveyed only John Bumpus of Oxford Street was wholeheartedly in favour of the proposal, while the others doubted it would work or be acceptable to the public. Publishers were also largely skeptical that the idea would find support. *The Bookseller*, by contrast, regretted the public washing of the trade's linen in the press and instead examined and counted the responses in the comment slips which told a different story, shown in Table 26.

The Bookseller's comment slip questions	Yes	No
Whether a customary trade discount of 2d in the shilling without odd copies, plus the usual discount at settlement, would allow a fair margin of profit.	300	121
Were they [booksellers] willing to adopt net prices if an influential minority of publishers revised their terms on the lines indicated?	388	28

Table 26 Responses to Macmillan's questions on net prices in *The Bookseller* **April 1890**¹⁹⁶

The Bookseller found that more than two thirds of respondents acknowledged that they could make a fair margin of profit with a trade discount of 2d in the shilling, and more than 90%

192 Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹³ PC, 15 March 1890, pp.318-322.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.322.

¹⁹⁵ Pall Mall Gazette, 17 March 1890, pp.1-2. Macmillan, The Net Book Agreement, p.13.

¹⁹⁶ BKS, April 1890, p.350.

would adopt the scheme if publishers revised their terms accordingly. The plan appeared to have been broadly welcomed by the trade but, disappointed that fewer than half of the expected responses were received, *The Bookseller* concluded that the low number of responses indicated that there was not enough support across the trade to justify its adoption.¹⁹⁷

Regardless, Macmillan proceeded to test his proposition on a new book by the eminent economist Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*. The book would be priced at 12/6 net, rather than the more usual 16s for a book of its kind. ¹⁹⁸ It was not the first net book Macmillan had published but it was the one with the most high-profile launch and proved that the net system could work for higher-priced books. ¹⁹⁹ Other publishers followed. In April 1891, *The Bookseller* reported that there had been 'a considerable number of net books published during March', a trend that continued throughout the year. ²⁰⁰ Macmillan themselves published 75 net books in 1894, rising to 136 in 1897. ²⁰¹ But net books remained a small percentage of books published and most continued to be offered with the ruinous 25% discount. ²⁰² Again, without the mechanisms with which to regulate prices and discounting, a lasting solution to underselling remained elusive.

There were other encouraging signs over the course of 1890 that trade relations were becoming closer and warmer. In the same month that Macmillan published his letter, a trade dinner organised by the Booksellers' Provident Institution was announced for members from all sections of the trade. *The Bookseller* reported that 'the gathering will probably be the largest and most representative that has ever taken place in the annals of the London trade',

¹⁹⁷ BKS, April 1890, p.350; May 1890, p.469.

¹⁹⁸ Macmillan, *The Net Book Agreement*, p.15; R. J. L. Kingsford, *The Publishers Association 1896-1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.6, and Barnes, p.144.

¹⁹⁹ Kingsford, p.5. However, Macmillan's account of the passing of the NBA states that the Marshall book was their first net book, Macmillan, *The Net Book Agreement*, p.17.

²⁰⁰ BKS, April 1891, p.325.

²⁰¹ Macmillan, *The Net Book Agreement*, p.17.

²⁰² Ibid., p.18.

where men whose names were 'household words' to each other would be meeting for the first time and where 'cordial relations' could be established.²⁰³ A special supplement of the dinner with details and photographs of many of the guests along with transcripts of the speeches was published in the April issue, emphasizing that even when trade dinners were regular events, 'no customary function in the trade ever drew the whole of its members together'.²⁰⁴

These events were effective, and in July 1890 *The Bookseller* reported 'a growing inclination on the part of the trade to enter into closer bonds of relationship one with another than has hitherto been customary'. More importantly, a 'private and informal' meeting of a dozen booksellers had been convened in May 1890 to discuss forming a London Booksellers' Society (LBS) with Vernon Whitaker nominated as one of the council members. The bookselling trade had finally found enough common cause to act together in their own interests, and *The Bookseller* was at the heart of this initiative.

The reasons that the book trade was not willing to submit itself to any form of trade organisation before this time were mainly the unwillingness of booksellers to restrict their entrepreneurial efforts. There were other organisations that could have acted as models for the British trade, such as Germany's Borsenverein (established in 1825) and France's Cercle de le Librairie (1847), but the British trade showed no desire to emulate them. Equally, there was no desire to return to the fixed prices enforced by the old regime. The report compiled by the committee formed in 1865 by Samuel Ives concluded that although the majority of those surveyed wanted some form of 'settled rules', they would not agree to 'any measures of a coercive character'. Any initiatives that threatened to 'cramp the free energies of the more

²⁰³ BKS, March 1890, p.240.

²⁰⁴ BKS, April 1890, Trade dinner supplement, no page number.

²⁰⁵ BKS, July 1890, p.704.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ BKS, May 1866, p.480.

intelligent and enterprising members of the trade' would be resisted.²⁰⁸ Competition was still preferable to cooperation.

Observers from the younger generation, benefitting from the advantage of hindsight not available to *The Bookseller*, offered their analysis for the reluctance to cooperate. Publisher William Heinemann (1863-1920) suggested that, unlike in the German states, the historically highly centralised nature of the British trade with its twin centres of production in London and Edinburgh meant that there was less need for a separate trade body.²⁰⁹ Unlike the more collegiate German trade, which had acted collectively to control the threat from underselling in 1887, competition within the British trade threatened its very survival:

I for one do not envy the person who is engaged in so ennobling a business as ours, living as he does in the companionship of the great minds, past and present; I do not envy him, I say, who feels that in such a calling and in such a cause there is no higher obligation, no other purpose, *than that of making profit at the expense of his neighbour*; [emphasis mine] [...] it is assuredly not the right road to the making of riches and the creating of a commonwealth.²¹⁰

In a memoir published in 1923 Joseph Shaylor (1844-1932), a bookseller and former managing director of wholesalers Simpkin Marshall, noted other factors that contributed to the particular character of the British trade, such as the over-production of books, their low prices, and the inclusion of 'outside firms', presumably referring to drapers, grocers, and latterly department stores, in selling books.²¹¹ W. G. Corp, chronicler of the Booksellers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, suggested that a combination of the 'highly individualistic tendency of the age' and the pusillanimity of the publishers of the day prevented the necessary cooperation.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Ibid

²⁰⁹ William Heinemann, *Bookselling: The System adopted in Germany for the Prevention of Underselling and for Promoting the Sale of Books* (Privately printed for the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland 1895), p.24.

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp.25-26.

²¹¹ Joseph Shaylor, Sixty Years a Bookman, (London: Selwyn and Blount Ltd, 1923), p.146.

²¹² W. G. Corp, Fifty Years: A Brief Account of the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland 1895-1945 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), p.6.

If the strengths of the book trade were its enterprise, diversity, and openness to new entrants, it was these very characteristics that had also made it resistant to accepting restrictive pricing practices. All of these concerns had been noted and commented on by *The Bookseller* but, nonetheless, other than sporadic notices of meetings of local associations in Edinburgh and Bradford, and the occasional attempt by assistants, the British book trade operated without a trade organisation until 1890, when the interests of publishers and booksellers finally coincided. The willingness of the editor of *The Bookseller* to participate in the formation of the organisation may also have lent credibility to the initiative and persuaded otherwise cautious booksellers to lend their support.

The meeting in May 1890 was quickly followed by a larger meeting of booksellers and wholesalers in June at Stationers' Hall to elect a committee. The governing council had been appointed earlier with Frederick Miles of Simpkin Marshall becoming President, bookseller Thomas Burleigh honorary secretary, and Francis Calder-Turner, also a bookseller, appointed treasurer. Vernon Whitaker, editor of *The Bookseller*, was also voted on to the council. This placed him and his journal at the heart of the new organisation and gave him the opportunity to influence the discussions. With this privileged access he could also ensure that negotiations with publishers were accurately reported so booksellers could appreciate that the society was acting in their interests and would join it themselves.

The interests of the new society were broader than those of the pre-1852 Booksellers' Association, which had primarily concerned itself with controlling pricing policies for new books by restricting the eligibility for trade discounts. Book prices remained a central concern and the LBS pledged to arrest the further encroachment of underselling, but other priorities included 'the general well-being of the London trade, collectively and individually,

²¹³ BKS, July 1890, p.704.

and any circumstance or condition, great or small, which threatens its members'. ²¹⁴ Its stated chief purpose was:

To invite the co-operation of the London trade in forming a permanent and organised society, having for its aim to maintain and improve the position of the retailer bookseller, to improve social intercourse, and to soften the asperities incidental to commercial rivalry.²¹⁵

More specific objectives included agreeing standardised trading terms, establishing a mechanism to resolve grievances that might arise between parties, and providing the opportunity for 'social intercourse' among members. Although these may not have been couched in the same words, the concerns of the LBS were broadly the same as those recommended by Joseph Whitaker in *The Bookseller* since 1858.

By the time of the inaugural dinner in October 1890, the LBS had attracted 143 new members, characterised by *The Bookseller* as 'almost every bookseller in London'. The society's first act was to draw up a uniform scale of published prices to limit discounts to 2d in the shilling. To ensure that the agreed terms were implemented across all sections of the bookselling trade, drapers, cooperatives and larger stores were also eligible for membership. Other suggestions raised at the dinner included establishing a rate for selling books to public and free libraries; a provision for the prompt replacement of damaged or imperfect copies; and the formation of a special section of the society for assistants, 'the booksellers of tomorrow', that would offer proper training and examinations. The society also wanted to address broader welfare concerns, and had approached both life insurance companies and the Booksellers' Provident Insitution to formulate schemes to provide an

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.701.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p.701.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.704.

²¹⁷ BKS, October 1890, p.1019. It was not clear how many of these 143 also included newsagents and drapers and other 'non-trade' booksellers.

²¹⁸ BKS, October 1890, pp.1019-20.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.1020.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp.1020-21.

annuity scheme and other types of support to members in need.²²¹ It would be another five years before the provincial trade was convinced of the benefits of joining their London brethren in the association, but they could follow the progress of the LBS in the regular reports of negotiations with publishers in *The Bookseller*. The Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland (ABGBI) was formed in 1895 with a mission to support the net system.²²²

The formation of the LBS in 1890 may have signalled the start of a shift in relations within the book trade, but tangible improvements for booksellers were slow to appear. The turning point came a few years later. Perhaps unsurprisingly, older firms like Longmans, John Murray, Bentley, and Macmillan continued to resist change, offering 'odd copies' and allowing up to a ruinous 40% discount to free libraries. Newer publishers like William Heinemann were seen to be 'as liberal in their terms' as could be expected.²²³ The older firms' lack of interest changed only when the better class of books that they relied on for much of their profits came under pressure from the two main libraries.

In the summer of 1894 W. H. Smith and Mudie's demanded that publishers delay the publication of cheap editions of novels that first appeared in the three-volume format for up to a year. Two months previously, the LBS had submitted a 'memorial to publishers' signed by a thousand London and provincial booksellers claiming that they could not make a profit from the 'better class' of books on current terms. Both the LBS and *The Bookseller* fully supported the initiative instigated by the two great circulating libraries. *The Bookseller* commented that few booksellers were interested in three-volume novels unless they also operated a library themselves, and the LBS declared themselves to be 'unanimously in favour

²²¹ Ibid., p.1020.

²²² *BKS*, January 1895, p.122. Also Corp, p.7.

²²³ *BKS*, April 1894, p.303.

²²⁴ PC, 7 July 1894, p.5. It was reported in *The Bookseller* the following month, August 1894, p.639.

²²⁵ BKS, May 1894, p.385.

of such novels being published at once in a six shilling form'. ²²⁶ Already under pressure from both sides, the traditional publishers who published many of the higher priced books suddenly found common cause with their younger colleagues and with booksellers, prompting a leader in *The Publishers' Circular* that mused whether it was time for publishers to follow the examples of authors and booksellers and 'combine to protect their interests'. ²²⁷

The formation of a national booksellers' association, the Associated Booksellers of Great Britain and Ireland (ABGBI) in 1895, increased the pressure further. In January 1896, the Publishers Association (PA) was formed with C. J. Longman as President and John Murray as Vice-President. The support of the most powerful publishers was essential for any trade-wide initiative, and it was an important indicator of the gravity of this moment that the committee of the PA was formed of the leading publishers including Longmans, Green & Co., William Blackwood and Sons, Smith, Elder & Co., and John Murray. Signalling the grip the leading houses continued to have over the trade and the entrenched nature of its structures, this new committee included many of the same houses that had controlled the previous association that was dissolved in 1852, with only one of the newer houses, William Heinemann, invited on to the committee. 228 After a break of more than four decades, both sides of the book trade were now ready to collaborate to protect their common interests and accept regulation for the common good. After four years of negotiation, the PA, accepting that they had to act 'in the interests of the booksellers', drew up terms of a scheme that was acceptable to the ABGBI, and the Net Book Agreement (NBA), described by Frederick Macmillan as the 'Magna Charta [sic] of the book trade', came into operation on 1 January 1900.²²⁹ It remained in force until 1995.

²²⁶ BKS, August 1894, p.637 and p.639.

²²⁷ PC, 7 July 1894, p.5.

²²⁸ Kingsford, p.8.

²²⁹ Macmillan, *The Net Book Agreement*, p.30.

The dogged belief of *The Bookseller* that the bookselling trade needed a trade association was sustained through its pages for nearly four decades. In the meantime, and in lieu of any other trade organisation, the editors themselves filled some of the roles expected of such a body. *The Bookseller* circulated information regarding the key issues affecting the trade, provided a forum to air grievances, exchange opinions, and rehearse the arguments that ultimately enabled the case to be won against the publishers when the opportunity finally arose. Once a real possibility of trade cooperation arose, Vernon Whitaker agreed to become a participant in the negotiations, lending credibility to the proceedings and strengthening the likelihood of success. However, after their decades of effort, it was a cruel irony that neither he nor his father lived to see the results of their labours. Vernon Whitaker died in February 1895, followed a few months later in May by his heartbroken father Joseph.

Conclusion

Joseph Whitaker's motivating principle with all his publications was to provide high-quality, affordable, and useful information for a specific, non-elite readership. He democratised access to what had often been privileged knowledge so that his readers could better understand the world they lived in. He urged them to be active participants in their milieu, whether within their trading community or as citizens of an empire, so they could improve their conditions for themselves and for others. For Whitaker, organising information helped to order the world and made it a fairer place for all, and for the last twenty years of his life, he retreated to his library in Enfield to apply his energies and expertise to Whitaker's Almanack. Back in Warwick Lane, his sons continued to maintain the information service that would develop into the foundations of the administrative infrastructure that the whole book trade, including the newly formed trade associations, would come to rely on in the next century.

Chapter Six Conclusion and suggestions for further research

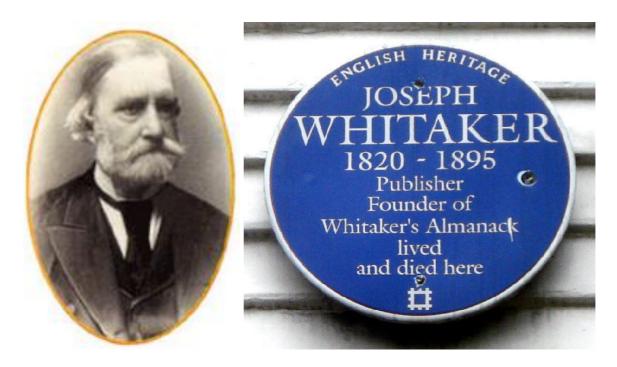


Fig.31 Joseph Whitaker in later life and the blue plaque at White Lodge, Enfield

Joseph Whitaker died on 15 May 1895 aged seventy-five and was buried in West Norwood cemetery next to his son Vernon. The centrality of the book trade in his life is poignantly illustrated by his request that the funeral procession start at the offices of *The Bookseller* in Warwick Lane. Like the English Heritage plaque installed at Whitaker's home, many of the newspaper obituaries emphasized his reputation as the name behind the almanack, but the literary and trade press acknowledged his contribution to the book trade and noted the high regard with which he was held:

He was a man greatly respected in the trade, and his opinion on any matter connected with publishing or selling of books carried great weight. He was an authority on all questions of copyright, and was frequently called upon to act as arbitrator.²

¹ TWA, Obituaries book: *Notes and Queries*, 18 May 1895.

² TWA, Obituaries book, Athenaeum, 18 May 1895.

The Book and News Trades Gazette described The Bookseller as 'The Times of bookselling journals', a recognition of the journal's continued pre-eminence despite the emergence of a number of newer trade publications such as The Bookman (1891). The obituary also mentioned Whitaker's 'magnificent' library, noting that 'he was never more delighted than when showing his treasures to friends who shared his own intense love of books'. However, Whitaker knew all too well that a love of books, however intense, was not enough for successful bookselling. At the very least it also required a thorough understanding of the unpredictable market for books and access to the latest bibliographic information.

The primary objective of this thesis was to evaluate Whitaker's contribution to the Victorian book trade. The study has found that from his earliest attempts as a publisher, his inclination was to create publications that were designed to inform readers but also to cultivate a sense of community and common cause. His long years as a bookseller in Oxford and London gave him valuable insights into the structural forces operating on and within the book trade and an understanding that the market for books had become more diversified and complex than in his youth. The new cadres of booksellers did not necessarily have the same training in bibliography and bookselling that he had had and needed better sources of information and guidance than was currently available. They also needed a trade association that could work to find common cause between publishers and booksellers, agree certain standard terms and discounts, and provide a forum for discussion of important trade matters. His intention with *The Bookseller* was to address this need by providing a monthly collection of information about new books, commercial news, book lists and notices of new books along with extensive advertising from publishers. Readers were also encouraged to

³ TWA, Obituaries book, *Book and News Trades Gazette*, 25 May 1895. What became of his library is not known but according to the history of White Lodge the building was sold in 1901 to a doctor and has been a medical practice ever since, see 'A History of White Lodge Surgery', p.2. The library may have been dispersed at that point or removed to Warwick Lane, where it later succumbed to bomb damage.

participate by sending letters to air opinions and grievances, or just exchange views on issues of the day.

The research has shown trade journals and catalogues to be an underexploited source of invaluable historical information. The trade journalism developed for *The Bookseller* did more than just inform; it also encouraged, supported, exhorted, and cajoled readers and led to J. Whitaker & Sons becoming the *de facto* bureaucrats of the book trade and the guardians of its history. The news stories and articles were designed to encourage them to recognise business opportunities, to use statistics to understand the fluctuations in trade and to discern areas of growth. Guidance was provided to explain some of the trade's customs and conventions, and advice was offered to help resolve disputes. The journal monitored the activities from within and outside the trade, highlighting threats where necessary and calling for damaging practices to be reformed. Whitaker knew that the trade as a whole - booksellers, publishers, and wholesalers - would benefit if cooperation and consensus could be found. Despite his unsuccessful attempts to cultivate the necessary community spirit, he knew that without the authority and mechanisms provided by trade institutions, any real improvement of the business culture, and in particular the vexed problem of underselling, would be impossible. The Bookseller and The Reference Catalogue became the information system on which both booksellers and publishers relied, and, once publishers accepted the need for agreed trade-wide standards and terms of business, helped to bring about the formation of the two trade associations.

This thesis shows that, over the course of nearly forty years, Whitaker's publications became the primary sources of information and means of communication for a modernising bookselling trade. Business records and archives of Victorian booksellers are rare, so the surviving issues of *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue* have preserved a unique record of information. *The Bookseller* has preserved the accumulation of snippets of the

everyday irritations and squabbles that threatened booksellers' livelihoods and so offers a unique view of the extensive but usually voiceless networks of small businessmen as they tried to make a living from a trade in books that tells a different but complementary history to that in *The Publishers' Circular*. The dramatic expansion of *The Reference Catalogue* from 1874 to 1898 vividly demonstrates the growth in book production over those years and contains perhaps the only record of some of the books that posterity has deemed not important enough for preservation in libraries.

Much has changed in the book trade since Whitaker's time, but some of the same problems persist. Even though booksellers have a trade association to offer advice and support, Nielsen Book UK to provide sales figures and market analysis, and, of course, *The Bookseller* to provide trade news, bookselling remains a challenging business. The number of bookshops has halved in a quarter century, falling from 1894 in 1995 when the NBA was abandoned to just 890 at the end of 2019.⁴ Independent booksellers are still threatened by aggressive price competition from monopolistic online retailers, supermarkets, and chain booksellers like Waterstones, as well as from rising fixed costs such as rent and labour. Hours are still unsociable, with chains often open seven days a week until 8pm, and earnings for assistants remain persistently low - starting salaries average £14-17,000 per year.⁵ Managing the huge volume of books in print is even more difficult. A bookshop can only stock a fraction of the 20 million titles in print.⁶ Nevertheless, Whitaker would have felt vindicated by the views of Britain's most important bookseller, James Daunt of Waterstones (UK), and Barnes and Noble (US), which reflect many of his own: booksellers must be free to select and

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⁴ *Guardian*, 10 January 2020; Booksellers Association, https://www.booksellers.org.uk/industryinfo/industryinfo/latestnews/Independent-Bookshop-Numbers-Grow-in-2019 [accessed 30 July 2021].

⁵ https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/bookseller [accessed 30 July 2021].

⁶ Figure quoted by industry expert Mike Shatzkin in an interview with John Gapper in the *FT Magazine*, 5 June 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/b943e6c1-f899-4fa4-b0d4-1b60cf51e5d0 [accessed 30 July 2021]. This figure must be treated as an estimate as not all books in English or other languages have ISBNs or other identifiers.

curate stock to suit their own customer base and choose books they are knowledgeable and passionate about, not just publishers' recommendations; committed booksellers should be properly trained and remunerated.⁷ It is a testament to Whitaker's understanding of the fundamentals of bookselling that his publications remain important to the publishing industry and are available for historians seeking further understanding of the Victorian book trade.

Further research

As demonstrated by this thesis, Victorian trade journals and catalogues are rich resources for historical research and have been under-exploited to date. At the end of Eliot and Sutherland's guide to the microfiche edition of *The Publishers' Circular*, a number of potential scholarly uses for the newly accessible journal were suggested. These included creating datasets to analyse aspects of book production such as the dynamics of pricing policies over a period of time, the growth of the Christmas book market, the expansion of educational publishing, changes in the strategies used for the marketing of books as illustrated in book advertising, and the changing nature of the trade as reflected in the classified advertisements for businesses for sale and situations vacant. Many of these propositions would be equally applicable for Whitaker's publications.

Efforts to use Whitaker's publications for research would be hugely advantaged if *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue* were to be digitalised. The issues contain rich information and data of great interest not only to book historians but, on the broad theme of 'the Victorian bookseller', also to scholars of literary, economic, and wider social history. For literary scholars, understanding about the market for second-hand books could be enriched by

⁷ Gapper; Ellen Peirson-Haggar, 'Can bookshops survive in the era of Amazon?: James Daunt on saving Waterstones', *New Statesman*, 9-15 July 2021, pp.16-17.

analysis of the 'Books Wanted' and 'Books for Sale' sections. The entries in 'Books Wanted' listed titles that individual booksellers needed to fulfil customer requests and could reveal the titles that were in the highest demand.

Analytical tools from other disciplines such as economic history could be applied to other areas of the journal. The Gazette section could be used to analyse the patterns of formation and transformation of book trade businesses. Such a study could provide further insights by including information from readers' letters that complained about the expense of running a bookshop (such as carriage costs of stock, rents, staffing) and the back page sections of the valuations of businesses in London. Insights into the experiences and circumstances of assistants could be examined by using their letters and job advertisements placed in the back pages.

To this end, a pilot study is underway to analyse the values and characteristics of bookselling businesses over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century by tabulating the sales listings in the back pages of *The Bookseller*. Details from all issues in 1859 and the first two issues of each year for 1869, 1879 and 1889 have been entered on a spreadsheet under a number of headings: name of valuer; business type (for example bookseller, stationer, printer); type of sale (sale or partnership); location; required down payment; typical annual returns; additional details and selling points. The information in the listings was not presented in a consistent format so some columns have been left empty as no relevant information was given. Although the spreadsheet includes firms that undertook activities such as stationery and printing, the pilot has analysed only the ones that indicated bookselling as their primary activity by listing it first.

⁸ The pilot has been initiated by the author of this thesis.

⁹ Note that for 1869 February was missing from the bound volume so March was used instead.

Preliminary findings suggest that there is much valuable economic data in these figures that could be extracted and analysed to better understand some of the economic components of a bookselling business. Most of the businesses were offered for sale, with just a few looking for investment from new partners. In 1859, all the sales that indicated a business type specified bookselling alone but in the subsequent decades this was rare. Although the majority listed bookselling first, suggesting it was their primary activity, many firms also sold stationery and fancy goods and a few offered printing or binding services. ¹⁰ A small number included wholesaling, a library, or a weekly newspaper. One entry advertised the sale of patent medicines and paper hanging in addition to bookselling and stationery. ¹¹ The presence of these additional activities confirms what book historians already understand about the trade: making a living from bookselling alone became increasingly difficult during the second half of the century.

The businesses were overwhelmingly based in England, from seaside towns on the Dorset coast, through Staffordshire, and on to the manufacturing towns of the north. Two thirds were from London and the south of the country, followed by the Midlands and the west. The fewest were found in the east and north. Details were added to convey the size and economic characteristics of the population such as 'university town', 'large seaport town', and 'superior Surrey suburb'. Others suggested the local market included customers with time for leisure as well as wealth such as in the 'thriving watering place in Wales' and the 'very fashionable town' on the south coast. The sales details were designed to reassure potential buyers of the viability, respectability, and resilience of the shop by making claims

¹⁰ The terms 'fancy goods' and the 'fancy trades' covered a variety of decorative goods made from paper, leather and metal such as small picture frames, paper decorations for fire surrounds, card holders, and paper fans.

¹¹ BKS, May 1859, p.992.

¹² Further research for the larger project will correlate the locations with changes in population density, wealth and literacy in England along with other evidence from journalism in *The Bookseller*.

¹³ BKS, January 1869, p.77; February 1879, p.202; February 1889, p.198.

¹⁴ BKS, January 1879, p.74; February 1879, p.202.

of being a 'leading business in the town' that had been in the same hands for 20 years, or that an old established business had 'a magnificent frontage in a main thoroughfare' and promised good profits from valuable stock.¹⁵

The details and figures themselves were produced by specialist valuers who were listed as the sales agents. In total, 8 valuers are noted in the pilot. Mr Holmes of Paternoster Row was the most frequent sales agent over the period, describing himself as 'valuer and accountant to booksellers, stationers, printers, newspaper proprietors etc', and by 1889 was advertising a 'Monthly Register' of over 150 businesses for sale. The larger project will attempt to discover additional information about these valuers in contemporary newspapers and periodicals and by searching for their archives.

The sum 'required' to purchase one of these businesses, the down payment, was based on the annual 'returns' of the business, with the balance to be paid in instalments.

Understanding whether the returns were the gross or the net profits after expenses will require further research, as will determining how accurate the figures really were.

Nonetheless, both listed sets of figures were indicative of the perceived value of the business. The required sums typically ranged from approximately 40-60% of the returns. Table 27 shows the value ranges of the quoted prices and the numbers in each field.

Sums 'required'	То £500	To £1000	To £3000	£3001+
Number of businesses	19	22	9	0
'Returns'	To £1000	То £3000	To £5000	£5001+
Number of businesses	7	24	1	3

Table 27 Advertised sales prices of bookselling businesses 1859-89

¹⁵ BKS, January 1889, p.103; February 1889, p.198.

¹⁶ BKS, January 1889, p.103.

The clearest indication from this initial analysis is that annual returns of the majority of bookselling businesses ranged from £1000 to £3000, roughly £118,000 and £358,000 in today's terms, and that the businesses themselves could be purchased with a down payment of between £500 and £1000, from approximately £59,000 to £118,000 today. The lowest figure listed was for a shop in Staffordshire which £200 required for a business with returns of £3000, while the highest was a bookseller in the City of London that posted returns of £13,000 and claimed to be a high-class business with valuable stock on a main thoroughfare. Further research in *The Bookseller*, *The Publishers' Circular*, and provincial newspapers may help to identify some of these businesses.

Items included in the sales varied but the research suggests that the lease on the premises, including residential and additional areas such as gardens, as well as the fixtures and fittings and the remaining stock were used to entice prospective buyers. ¹⁹ A bookseller in the west of England even offered photographs of the premises to potential buyers. The rent was often specified, sometimes described as being helpfully low. The stability and sustainability of some businesses were conveyed in references to their longevity, that they were established businesses of many years standing and to the valuer having received 'satisfactory' reasons for the sale. That these reasons could be death or ill-health, rather than insolvency or other economic calamities, was meant to underline that the business was sound and had a good local reputation.

The next stage for the project is to add another decade to take the range to 1899 and to include several months for each decade from the middle of the year to ascertain any seasonal

¹⁷ It is notoriously difficult to compare values over time but, according to Measuring Worth, the website that provides calculations to help understand the relative worth of commodities and labour over time, the value of businesses can be calculated using the 'Project' category, see https://www.measuringworth.com/index.php. ¹⁸ *BKS*, February 1879, p.202; February 1889, p.198.

¹⁹ Daniel Macmillan's memoirs describe the acquisition of a bookselling business in Cambridge and the tactics employed to dispose of the stock they had just gained. The larger project will research other accounts and experiences to provide context to this question.

differences. Relevant historical detail will also be added to enable analysis of the data in its contemporary context. Some of this additional information will be sourced from secondary texts but *The Bookseller* will also be used, particularly the notices of business changes in the front pages and the job advertisements in the back pages that reveal changes in booksellers' marketing strategies to attract customers. For instance, in the 1880s job specifications began to require potential staff to demonstrate not only knowledge of bookselling and stockkeeping but also experience of window-dressing, implying that the shop's location and its likelihood of attracting passing trade was increasingly important. ²⁰ The addition of this sort of information to the analysis of the business valuations will result in a richer and more detailed understanding of the economics of the Victorian book trade.

The Reference Catalogue also lends itself to further research. The addresses of the publishers printed on their catalogues could be used as a source for mapping the migration from traditional centres of book production into other parts of London. The project could use the entries in Hodson's Directory (1855) as a starting point and cross reference with The Bookseller until 1874. Earlier attempts to map the locations of book trade businesses, such as James Raven's 'Bookscape' project for the eighteenth-century book trade, had to rely on evidence from property tax records and fire insurance archives, but the task for the Victorian period would be greatly simplified by The Reference Catalogue. ²¹ By plotting the addresses printed in the catalogues, maps could be created to follow the movement of publishers across London as the centre of gravity moved away from Paternoster Row and into other neighbourhoods.

²⁰ See for instance BKS, July 1889, p.749.

²¹ James Raven, *Bookscape: Geographies of Printing and Publishing in London Before 1800* (London: The British Library, 2014) and 'Constructing Bookscape: Experiments in Mapping the Sites and Activities of the London Book Trades of the Eighteenth Century', in J. Murray (ed.), *Mappa Mundi: Mapping Culture/Mapping the World* (Ontario: University of Windsor, 2001), 35–59.

More broadly, *The Bookseller* could be used to contribute to an existing project initiated by Greenwich University that explores trade journals as pedagogical tools and help students understand the world of work, how attitudes to work were formed and changed, and to what extent these attitudes were influenced by the trade press.²² This would be particularly apt as *The Bookseller* was the blueprint for many of the trade journals that followed it.

This thesis has found that Joseph's Whitaker's contribution to the Victorian book trade was influential and far-reaching, and that the description by David Whitaker of his great-grandfather's firm as the 'mechanic' to the book trade understates his achievements. The information system he created with *The Bookseller* and *The Reference Catalogue* helped to transform a traditional trade into a modern global industry, and remnants of his influence on the contemporary publishing industry are still discernible 126 years after his death. On their blue plaque, English Heritage may define him as the originator of a popular almanack, but this thesis has shown that his achievements were of far greater and of more lasting significance: he deserves to be recognised as one of the most important publishers of the nineteenth century.

²² See BLT at www.blt19.co.uk for more details.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of publications by J. Whitaker and J. Whitaker & Sons

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1851	The Penny Post	John Henry Parker 377 Strand
1851-4	The Family Almanack and Educational Register	John Henry Parker Oxford and London [to Pall Mall with JW after 1852, back to Parker after 1854]
1852	Whitaker's Penny Almanack	John Henry Parker 377 Strand
1851-2	Whitaker's Clergyman's Diary	John Henry Parker 1851-2 Oxford and London
1852	The Short-comings of our public education: a letter to the Right Hon. the Earl of Lonsdale	41 Pall Mall
1853	Whitaker's Clergyman's Diary	J. Whitaker 41 Pall Mall [after 1854, titles merged with Gilbert's and taken over by Stationers]
1853	The Christian Student: An Educational Magazine	J. Whitaker 41 Pall Mall
1853	Synodalia: A Journal of Convocation	41 Pall Mall
1853	Letter to 'A Country Clergyman' published as A Few Thoughts on Magazine Literature as it affect the Church of England – Rev Armstrong	41 Pall Mall

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1853	The Churchman's Magazine: a monthly review of Church Progress and General Literature	J. Whitaker [collected edition, January to June 1853]
1853	The Sympathy of Christ	J. Whitaker
1853	Domestic Offices and Litanies, for the Use of Families, Schools etc	J. Whitaker
1853	Five Books of the Church new edition	J. Whitaker
1853	Readings for Sundays and Holydays	J. Whitaker 41 Pall Mall
1853	Sermons Preached in the Church of St Bartholemew, Cripplegate, Advent Tide 1852	J. Whitaker
1853	Church Expansion	J. Whitaker
1853	Nelson Form of Family Prayer 2 nd edition	J. Whitaker
1853	Biographical Sketches of Great Monarchs for Young People	J. Whitaker
1853	Pitcairn's Island: A Lecture delivered at the Christchurch School-room, St Pancras 12 January 1853	J. Whitaker 41 Pall Mall
1853	Tangible Typography: or How the Blind Read	J Whitaker 41 Pall Mall

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1853	A charge delivered to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Moray and Ross, at his primary visitation, September 1, 1853 / by the Right Reverend Robert Eden, D.D. Bishop of Moray and Ross, and published at their request.	
1853	The Church Hymnal 24mo or 18mo, 1s, cloth The Church Music Book 8vo, 1s	41 Pall Mall
1853	Sir Alfric and Other Tales	J. Whitaker
1854	Letter to the Right Reverend William Skinner D.D., Bishop of Aberdeen, and Primus of the 'Reformed Catholic Church in Scotland: in reference to the dangerous character of the teaching contained in Archdeacon Wilberforce's work on the Holy Eucharist / by the Rev. John Alexander 54 pp	Edinburgh and London: R Lendrum & Co, J. Whitaker
1854	Thoughts on the war, and how it may be shortened: with prayers for families and individuals	
1855	The Artist	310 Strand
1856-59	The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical review	John Henry Parker 377 Strand
1858	The Bookseller	William Hayden from Jan 1860 Edward Tucker from July 1860 Joseph Whitaker from 1870 J. Whitaker and Sons from 1887
1868-	Whitaker's Almanack	J. Whitaker

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1868	Sir Aelfric, and other tales —Second ed., rev.	London
1874-	The Reference Catalogue of Current Literature	J. Whitaker
1876	Whitaker's Journal of Amusing and Instructive Literature	
1878	The Path of Duty: a few plain directions for more worthily performing, I. Our duty towards God; II. Our duty towards our neighbour	J. Whitaker (and 3 other publishers) 175pp, 14cm
1879	The Book of Private Prayer	J. Whitaker
1880	The Stationery Trades Journal	
1880	The Daily Round: Meditation, Prayer and Praise adapted to the course of the Christian Year	
1882	The Daily Round: meditation prayer and praise adapted to the course of the Christian year	J Whitaker
1882	The Holy Communion Part I. Its nature and benefits with a notice of some common objections to receiving it. Part II. An explanation of what is required of them who come to the Lord's supper	
1884	The Daily Round: Meditation Prayer and Praise adapted to the Course of the Christian Year	Printed in Oxford by E Pickard Hall and Horace Hart, printers to the University. Advertisement in back page says the book is available in various formats — *48mo, *32mo, Imperial 32mo, *Royal 24mo, Foolscap 8vo, *Crown 8vo, Demy 8vo, uniform with various editions of the prayer book. * means also avail with red border lines and reed initial letters

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1884	The Uncanonical and Apocryphal Scriptures Introductions to the several books and fragmentsand a general introduction to the Apocrypha	
1884	The Morning Psalms: Meditations for Every Day in the Year	Printed at the University Press Oxford, Horace Hart
1884	The Evening Psalms	Oxford Horace Hart, printer to the University
1885	The Daily Round	
1885	The Rule of Prayer: a devotional commentary on the Lord's Prayer/by the author of "The rule of faith," "The rule of life."	Printed at University Press Oxford, Horace Hart
1885	Devotional readings for family prayer: for every day in the course of the Christian year, with a form of responsive prayers for one week / by the Rev. J.J. Dillon, Rector of Aghade, in the Diocese of Leighlin	
1885	Devotional readings for family prayer: for every day in the course of the Christian year, with a form of responsive prayers for one week / by the Rev. J.J. Dillon, Rector of Aghade, in the Diocese of Leighlin	Printer: Horace Hart
1885	The Gospel Story: A Plain Commentary on the Four Holy Gospels, Containing the Narrative of Our Blessed Lord's Life and Ministry by Rev W Mitchell MA	
1885	Devotional readings for family prayer: for every day in the course of the Christian year, with a form of responsive prayers for one week / by the Rev. J.J. Dillon, Rector of Aghade, in the Diocese of Leighlin	Horace Hart
1885	Confirmation and First Communion	J. Whitaker

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1882	The Holy Communion new revised edition	
1885	The Daily Life	
1885	The Book of Private Prayer / issued by direction of the Lower House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury	J. Whitaker
1886	Acts of the Church 1531-1885: The Church Her Own Reformer as Testified by the Records of Her Convocation	J. Whitaker 12 Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row
1887	Classical and Foreign Quotations, Law Terms and Maxims, Proverbs, Mottoes, Phrases and Expressions in French German, Greek, Italian, Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese with translations, references, explanatory notes and indexes.	J. Whitaker and Sons 12 Warwick Lane Paternoster Row
1888	Latin without a Master: A Course of Lessons in the Latin Language 1s 6d French without a Master: A Course of Lessons in the French Language 1s 6d Italian without a Master: A Course of Lessons in the Italian Language 1s 6d Spanish without a Master: A Course of Lessons in the Spanish Language 1s 6d German without a Master: A Course of Lessons in the German Language 3 volumes at 1 6d each Book-Keeping without a Master 1s 6d	J. Whitaker and Sons
1888	The Morning Psalms	J. Whitaker and Sons

date	Title	Proprietor and other details where available
1888- 1894	The Morning Psalms: Meditations for every day in the year / by the author of "The Daily Round"	
1894	The Evening Psalms: Meditations for every day in the year	J. Whitaker and Sons
1898	Whitaker's Naval and Military Directory	J. Whitaker and Sons
1899	Whitaker's Naval and Military Directory and Indian Army List	J. Whitaker and Sons

Appendix 2. Advertisers in *The Bookseller* sample years 1859 and 1876

1859	Number of advertisers	Percentage of pages with adverts
January	166	80% (51 of 64)
February	168	55% (34 of 62)
March	168	44% (31 of 70)
April	168	53% (33 of 62)
May	174	60% (47 of 78)
June	174	50% (28 of 56)
July	174	72% (56 of 78)
August	174	60% (30 of 50)
September	174	71% (48 of 68)
October	168	60% (42 of 70)
November	123	95% (157 of 166)
December	129	76% (35 of 46)
Average	163	71% (52 of 73)

1876	Number of advertisers	Percentage of pages with adverts
January	96	71% (61 of 86)
February	141	89% (112 of 126)
March	108	94% (81 of 86)
April	111	74% (70 of 94)
May	117	77% (60 of 78)
June	117	58% (50 of 86)
July	117	74% (64 of 86)
August	120	80% (88 of 110)
September	104	76% (50 of 66)
October	135	83% (98 of 118)
November	159	72% (128 of 178)
December	159	66% (46 of 70)
Average	124	78% (76 of 97)

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