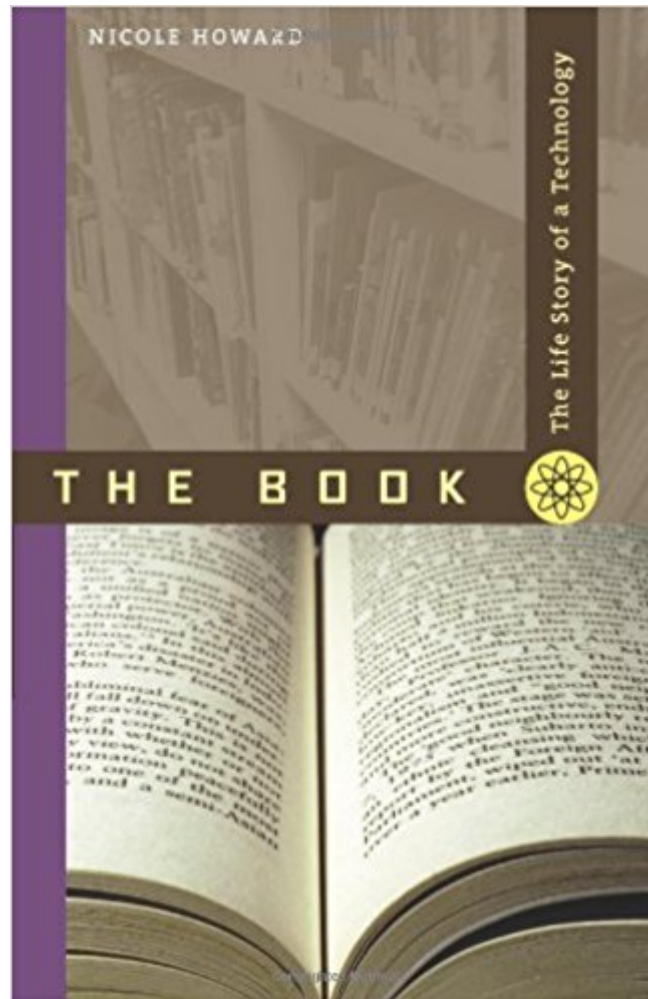


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The Book: The Life Story Of A Technology



Synopsis

The printed book is one of life's most frequently encountered technologies. Historian Nicole Howard provides a comprehensive survey of the evolution of this technology, tracing its development across many centuries and cultures. No other technology in human history, declares Howard, has had the impact of this invention. By examining the book as a technology, Howard reveals how profoundly information and media have shaped history and how vital the technology of the book has been to cultural and intellectual change. This engaging study extends from clay tablets and rolls of papyrus to bound folio sheets, from inks and scripts to lead type and printing presses, from the Linotype machine to the laptop. Cross-cultural in scope, it examines innovations in the production and manufacture of books from the Middle and Far East, Europe, and the Americas. Howard recounts printing techniques from Gutenberg's first press to 21st-century electronic publishing. Howard's broad overview and accessible writing style make this book ideal for students and bibliophiles alike. The volume includes a glossary of terms, a timeline of important events, and a selected bibliography of useful resources for further information.

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Customer Reviews

This is a useful book if you are looking for a standard and readable history of the book. It seemed to me authoritative, but its citations are a bit skimpy. Sometimes the author tells us where she's getting her information, and at other times she doesn't. The bibliography is OK. Howard doesn't advance an argument or any new thesis about the history of the book. Rather, this is a conventional history of a

technology, based on evolution, progress, development. I wish she had had more to say about what newer technological changes actually pose to the relevance of the book itself. She just assumes that the book will always be important, but I think this is a presumption that might require some more reflection.

I came across THE BOOK while looking for a new text for my History of Publishing course, and after reading it adopted it and revamped the course. Nicole Howard has done an excellent job of telling the story of the book—its origins, economics, labor history and technological development. We learn about papyrus and parchment and paper; the invention of movable type, including the lawsuits between Gutenberg and his business partners (he lost) and the role of the alphabet in printing; the development of books sizes, topics, and print runs; paratext and illustration; book banning and copyright; industrialization and computerization; and the reaction of the labor force to change. As a reader, I wish the book had been longer, but as a teacher it's just right. Well organized, clearly explained and replete with illustrations, yet with plenty of room for students to find topics for further research.

I purchased this book for a class I was taking. I found the book to be delightfully informative without being boring or overly flowery. If you are interested in the history of the book, pick this up. You will not be disappointed.

A good introduction to the subject; one reviewer called it "serviceable" and I would agree. It tells you all you need to know in clear prose -- great for an undergraduate, perhaps too linear for graduate students.

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