

COLUMBIAN PRINTING PRESS OR COLUMBIAN PROOF PRESS

Description

Super-Royal Columbian Press: Platen Width 21 inches, Length: 29 inches.

Physical dimensions:

Height: 2.4m ; Width: 1.52m ; Length: 1.84m

Nameplate inscription: R Besley & Co, No. 1585, Fann St, London, 1864.

Cartouche: Fruit and flowers form a frame around the nameplate

Small plaque inscription: Donated School of Graphic Arts by Collin & Company Ltd, 1963

Background

Printing is one of oldest courses taught at Sydney Technical College (known as TAFE NSW). Printing and its allied trades were identified with Sydney Technical College from "8th April 1890,...as been the actual date" p.222.

Acknowledgement of the required skill to operate and manipulate carefully thought out type composition.

This Columbian press was used as a proofing press. Proofing is a preliminary version of a document to check how it will appear before going to press. It appeared in the Sparkies, Foodies & Fashionistas Exhibition, held in the Museum, August 1st - 28th, 2011 to commemorate 125 years.

Craig Rollins, Head Teacher, Printing Department, TAFE NSW Ultimo, recalled it "being used in the Exhibition printing wanted posters".

He further commented:

"It may have been used in later as a proofing press in its later years but it was also used as a production letterpress printing machine in its previous lives and would have produced all manner of printed material from newspapers, book, account books, ledgers and poster work".

It was donated by Collin & Co Ltd, March 1963 to the School of Graphic Arts. College students completed restoration work prior to the Exhibition. However, Craig Rollins accredits restoration to its present condition to Bruce Frisch-Faye, Printing Technical Officer before it was moved to the Library. The machine can still be made operable today in order to print once again".

Small plaque inscription: *Donated School of Graphic Arts by Collin & Company Ltd, 1963*

The Columbian press was invented by George Clymer, in 1813, a mechanic from the USA. The press failed to gain a significant market share in America. Clymer moved to the United Kingdom in 1818 and began producing the Columbian press in that country. This press was innovative in the application a combination of hand levers to improve the pressure applied to the print process

without additional strain to the print operator. The decorative embellishments and iron structure soon became features of the printing industry in the UK and the rest of Europe.

After Clymer's death many manufacturers and distributors began to issue Columbian presses. R Beasley's Fann Street Type Foundry was one of these. Beasley was an employee of William Thorowgood's type face from 1826, until he formed a partnership with Thorowgood in 1836. Robert Besley & Co became name in 1849, on Thorowgood's retirement.

Ornamental symbols

Counterweight: American eagle; Talons grip Jove's thunderbolts (War); one side has the olive branch (Peace), the other the cornucopia of Plenty (Prosperity). Alluding to the balance of power Height: 50cm

Sub counterweight sits on the middle of the fulcrum: Columbia (female personification of USA)

Sea serpents (or Dolphins): Appears on face of the great leaver and ironwork appears at the end of the counter leaver. Sea serpents are symbolic of the power of wisdom

Caduceus: The two pillows, on both sides, are embellished with the winged staff and serpents of Hermes. Hermes is the Greek God of Messages and Trade. The right pillow also has near the top an ear of wheat (Productivity). Legs: The press has four legs that terminate to a mould of either paws of a lion or possible eagle talons.

References

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