

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Iron Handpress*

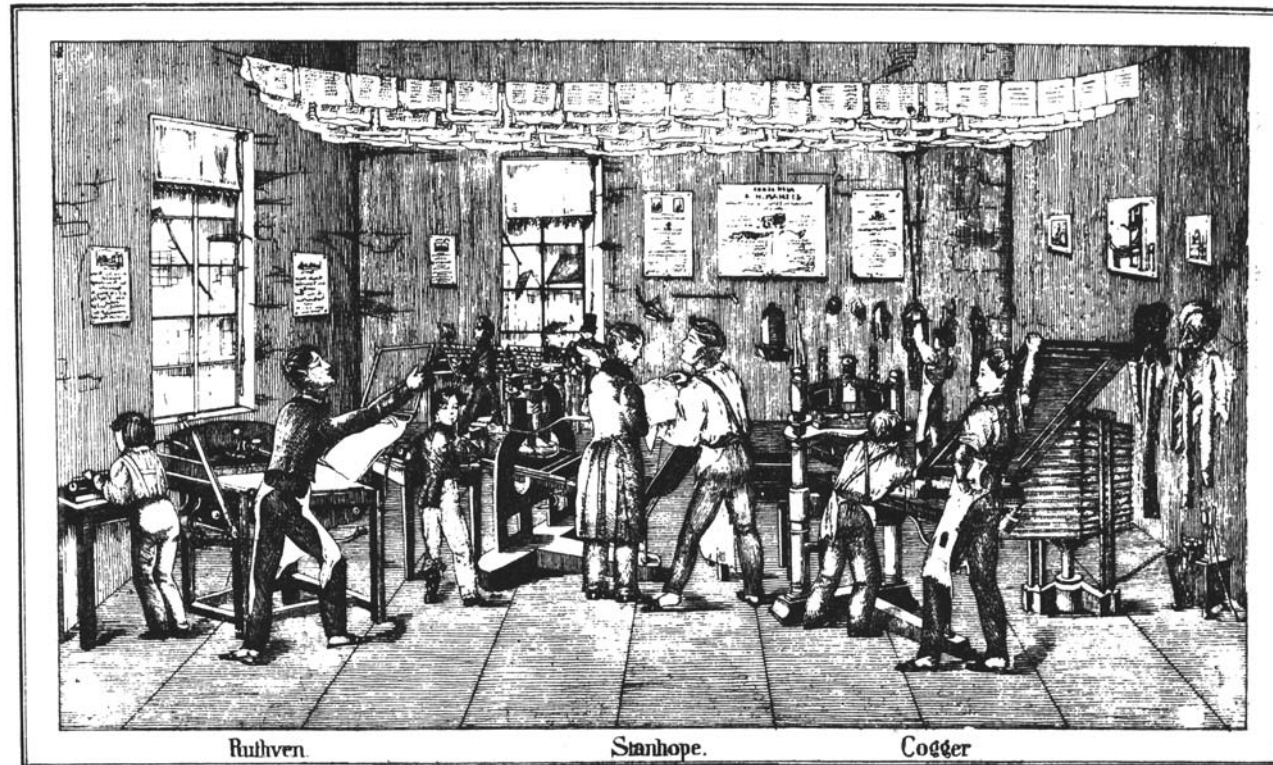


Plate 6. Printing office with Ruthven, Stanhope of the first construction, and Cogger presses, ca. 1820. The boys are inking the forms with rollers; an inking stand can be seen at the far left. The pressmen are ready to print as soon as the forms have been inked. (Source: Karl Dieterichs, *Die Buchdruckpresse von Johannes Gutenberg bis Friedrich Koenig*, 1930, fig. 42, courtesy of the Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, Mainz.)

Prior to the nineteenth century, British and American printing presses were made of wood. So when Moxon (1683, p. 37) says, “There are two sorts of *Presses* in use, viz. the old fashion [Fig. 3.1] and the new fashion,” [Fig. 3.2] he is referring to two different models of seventeenth-century wooden presses, both with screw mechanisms. The “old fashion” press (see Plate 3 on p. 2) was referred to as the *English common press* in the eighteenth century and was used throughout England and America well into the nineteenth century. This is the type of press that Benjamin Franklin used in London in the 1720s. By 1800, several improvements had been made on the “old-fashion press,” although to my untrained eye, it appears to be identical to the improved press shown in Fig. 3.4 on p. 105.

The “new-fashion” press, which was first used in Amsterdam in the 1620s, was better known as the *Blaeu press* after its inventor, Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571–1638) – note that Blaeu is also spelled *Blaew*, *Blaen*, and *Blew* in some printers’ manuals. From Moxon’s comments, it would seem that the new press was not well-known, or even much used, in England before the late-1680s. Luckombe (1771, p. 292) limited his section on the printing press to Blaeu’s, saying that “Those presses on the old principle are too common to need a particular account of, we shall therefore confine the following description to those of the new structure.” Descriptions of the Blaeu press, as well as illustrations of its parts, will be found on pp. 37–70 in Moxon’s manual and on pp. 292–320 in Luckombe’s. Moxon has an illustration of the assembled press in plate 4, facing p. 37; Luckombe, on p. 293.

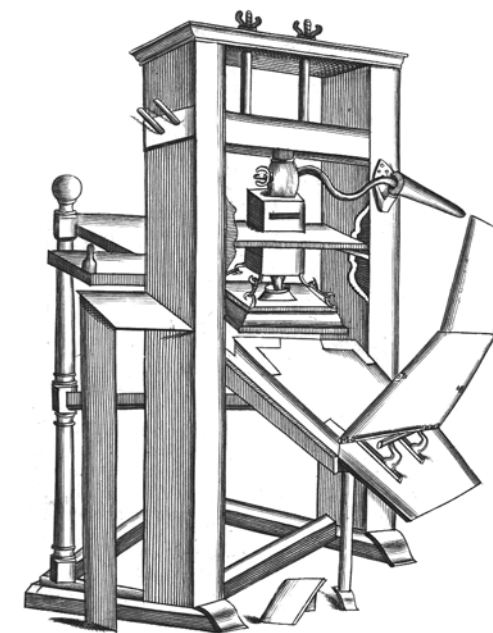


Fig. 3.1. *Seventeenth-century common press* – from Moxon (1683, plate 3, following p. 36), courtesy of Rochester Institute of Technology