

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Making Register*



Plate 18. Women compositors at The Brethren Publishing Co. in Ashland, Ohio, late-nineteenth century. (Courtesy of the Graphic Arts Collection, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.)

Making register was the final step in the making-ready process, see Chapter 14. Technically speaking, making register involved: (1) fixing the *points* – the narrow, spur-tipped strips of metal that held the paper in position while working off the second side of the sheet – on the tympan frame; and (2) preparing the form for backup, generally referred to as *reiteration* in nineteenth-century printers' manuals. Even though the points had to be positioned on the tympan before the first side of the sheet could be printed, their primary function was to hold the sheet of paper in register while the second side was worked off. Pressmen usually verified the position of the white-paper form before working it off by pulling a few work-and-turn proofs. However, once the backup form was put on the press, the registration had to be checked again. Van Winkle's instructions, on p. 402 in Reading 14.1, also include information on the function of points within the overall context of making ready.

The shape of the points changed little in the 125 years between Moxon (1683) and Stower (1808). Moxon's point, which is shown in Fig. 15.1, and Stower's, which is shown in Fig. 15.2, will confirm this observation.



Fig. 15.1. *Point and screw* – from Moxon (1683, plate 9, facing p. 67), courtesy of Rochester Institute of Technology

At a glance, the basic procedures for backing up a form were: (1) laying the white paper on the tympan sheet without impaling it on the points; (2) pulling an inked proof; (3) turning this proof over from top to bottom and putting it back on the points with the inked impression against the tympan; (4) placing a waste sheet over the sheet that is already on the points; (5) pulling another impression – the thickness of the waste sheet would cause the type to bite more deeply into the sheet against the tympan, leaving a visible, embossed impression in the paper; and then, (6) verifying that the pages on both sides of the sheet backed up. By comparing the alignment of the lines of type on both sides of the sheet – one side inked and the other blind – the pressman was able to ascertain if the two sides were, indeed, in register.

Moxon (1683, pp. 288–290) – who was the source for Stower's instructions (1808, pp. 360–361) and Timperley's in Reading 15. 5 on p. 439 – describes a slightly different method for registering the backup. He begins by laying two sheets of white paper on the tympan sheet. The bottom sheet will serve as his register sheet, and the top one, his waste sheet. Next, he pulls an uninked impression that will, at the same time, impale both sheets of paper on the points. He then removes these sheets, turning the bottom sheet over from top to bottom and replacing it on the points together with the waste sheet before pulling the second impression. Moxon examines the blind impression on the register sheet, using it as a guide to bring the two sides into register. His procedures make more sense to me than Timperley's, since Moxon's method does not soil the tympan sheet.