



2002

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Draper, Larry W. (2002) "Book of Mormon Editions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 11 : No. 2 , Article 7.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Book of Mormon Editions

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Reference M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds.,
*Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon:
History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*, 39-44
(published in lieu of *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*
11/2 [2002]).

ISBN 0-934893-68-3

Abstract Larry Draper describes his role in providing Royal Skousen with copies of various early editions of the Book of Mormon for use in the critical text project. Draper also describes the printing process of the Book of Mormon, which process was made clearer because of Skousen's project. Draper explains the stereotyping method of printing that was used for the 1840 Cincinnati/Nauvoo edition and the 1852 Liverpool edition of the Book of Mormon.

Book of Mormon Editions

LARRY W. DRAPER

I WAS employed in the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 18 years (until 1997). Earlier, as a graduate student at BYU, I worked as a student employee in Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library, where, among other assignments, I assisted Chad Flake with his Mormon bibliography during the years 1976–78; this monumental bibliography was published in 1978. I mention this because the work I did for Chad partially prepared me to assume the role of the rare book librarian at the Historical Department when Don Schmidt retired in 1985. I took that position during those sad days of the Mark Hofmann forgeries and bombs.

I met Royal Skousen in 1988 when it became my job to give Royal access to copies of various editions of the Book of Mormon so that he could do the necessary analysis of the text as it changed from edition to edition. We provided copies of at least thirteen different editions (1837, 1840, 1849, 1852, 1858 Wright, 1874 RLDS, 1879, 1888 large print, 1902, 1905, 1906 large print, 1911, and 1920). In most cases these copies were scanned at the Humanities Research Center at BYU and thus put into electronic form, which has facilitated analysis of textual changes.

We glean information about the printed editions of the Book of Mormon mainly from these sources:

- (1) accounts of what happened, either in manuscript or in published form

- (2) knowledge of the physical methods of the printing process (in other words, how the printing was actually done on a printing press)
- (3) actual evidence left behind in copies of the books

Most of the time, one source will confirm information from another source—for example, when a published account of what happened for a particular edition agrees with the physical evidence presented by a copy of the book. Occasionally one source of information will disagree with another and we arrive at an unexpected conclusion, as the following cases will demonstrate.

The Unbound Sheets of the 1830 Edition

A study of the printing history of the Book of Mormon first requires an examination of the unbound sheets of the 1830 edition. These sheets were acquired by Wilford Wood, a furrier from Bountiful, Utah. Later the sheets came into the possession of the Historical Department, where they are housed today.

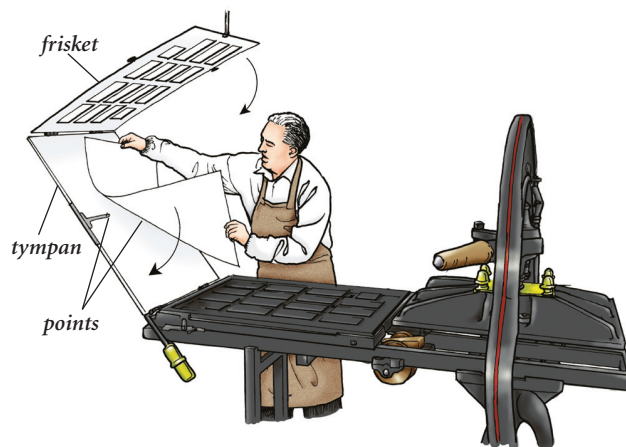
We learn several interesting things by examining these sheets. One is that John Gilbert's description of the printing of the 1830 edition is essentially accurate, even though the account was written sixty-three

years after the event.¹ We also learn that the unbound sheets are not proof sheets (as had been claimed). Except for the last sheet (gathering 37), there is no evidence that these sheets were used as proof sheets. Nor is there any evidence that they were the first copies to come off the press (as had also been claimed). Rather, the evidence shows that these sheets are “throwaways”—that is, sheets that had flaws which made them unacceptable for a bound book, and they were therefore removed from the pile of usable sheets.

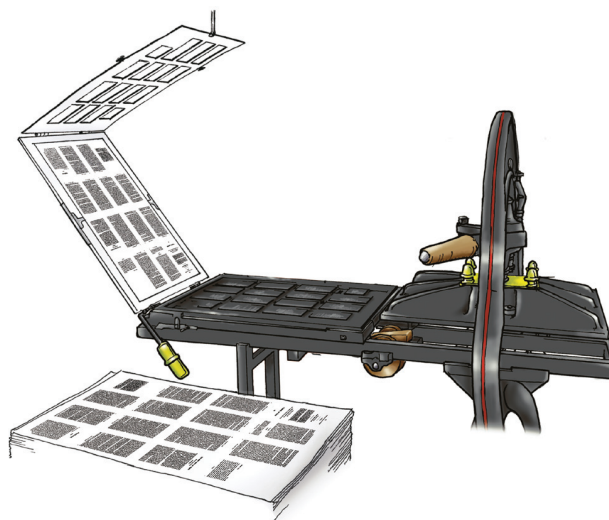
Gilbert states that the 1830 edition was “printed 16 pages at a time, so that one sheet of paper made two copies of 16 pages each, requiring 2500 sheets of paper for each form of 16 pages. There were 37 forms of 16 pages each.”² So what does that mean? It means that the book was printed using the “work and turn” (or half-sheet imposition) method, where each side of a sheet was printed from one form of type with one pull of the press—that is, 2500 sheets of large paper that, following the printing of both sides, were cut in half to create five thousand half-sheets.³ Wilford Wood’s unbound sheets are a complete set of these half-sheets, one for each of the book’s 37 gatherings. The originally larger sheet was folded in half and cut down the center with a bone cutter to create two half-sheets. The resulting half-sheets therefore have one rough edge on one of their longer sides. Louis Crandall, proprietor of the Crandall Historical Printing Museum in Provo and a printer by trade, came up to the Historical Department to help with the examination of the unbound sheets. He suggested that we look for pinholes along the roughly cut edge of each half-sheet. These pinholes should be there if the printer had used the “work and turn” method. And indeed, we did find pinholes on the unbound half-sheets. The pinholes resulted from two pins (called points) piercing the full sheet when the first side of the sheet was printed. The pinholes allowed the printer, when printing the second side of the sheet, to correctly place the sheet so that the printed text on both sides would be properly aligned (or registered).

Thus the unbound sheets that Wilford Wood acquired confirm John Gilbert’s description of how the Book of Mormon was printed in 1829–30. This

Printing a gathering of 16 pages

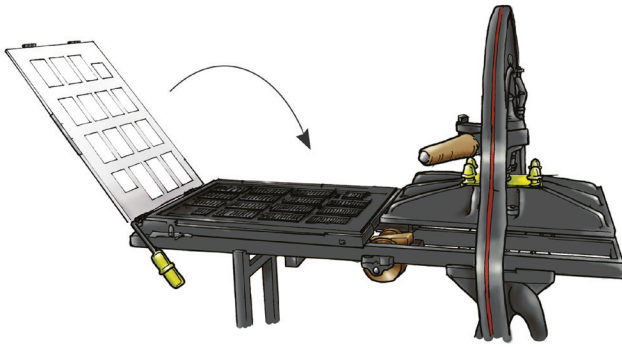


1 To print the first side (the “iteration” process), the sheet is placed on the tympan and positioned against a horizontal and vertical set of guides. The lower horizontal guides (called “duck bills”) position the paper level. The sheet is centered by means of the vertical guide. The frisket is lowered down over the sheet to hold it against the tympan.

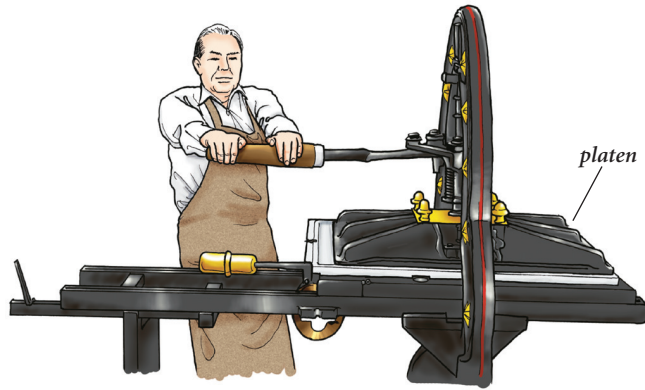


4 The bed of type with the tympan and frisket is slid back out. The tympan and frisket assembly, with the frisket holding the sheet tight against the tympan, is then lifted from the inked type. The frisket is raised and the printed sheet is removed from the points and placed on a table to dry.

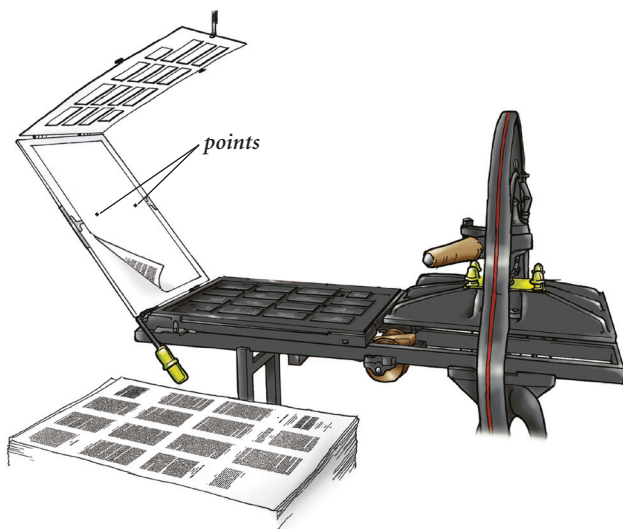
for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon



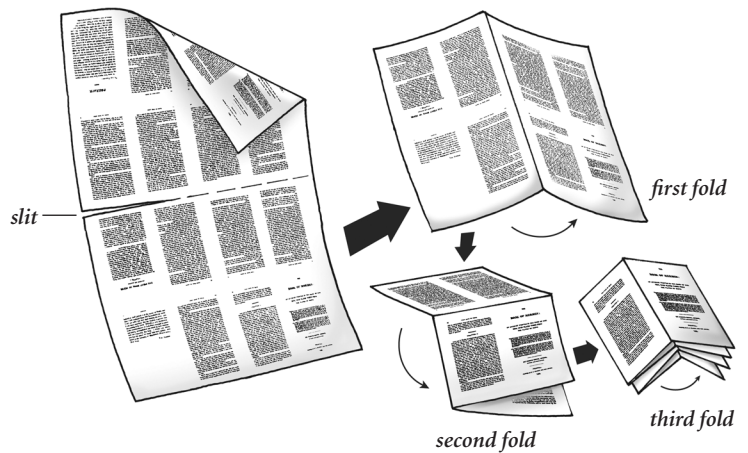
2 The form is inked by using ink balls, and then the tympan and frisket with the positioned sheet are lowered down on top of the bed of type.



3 The bed is slid under the platen. The pressman gives a strong pull, allowing the platen bearers to ensure an even pressure over the entire bed of type and to drive the two pinlike points through the sheet of paper.



5 When printing the second side of the sheet (the “re-iteration” process), the sheet is rotated head to foot, then placed on the tympan so that the points enter the pinholes made in the iteration. Steps 2 through 4 are then repeated. This “work and turn” process reduces by half the required number of impositions.



6 The completely printed sheet can now be slit into two half-sheets. Each half is then folded three times to make a “gathering” of 16 pages.

imposition arrangement also explains the patterns of in-press changes for some of the gatherings. Early on in the printing of a given sheet, the typesetter might find a few typos in that sheet and would have the pressmen stop so that these typos could be corrected.

Stereotyping: The 1840 Cincinnati / Nauvoo Edition

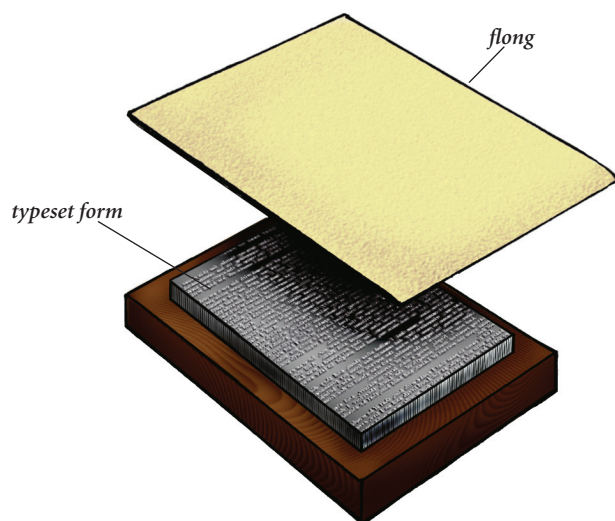
The printing method known as *stereotyping* was first used around 1799. It is a process of creating printing plates from a typeset form of moveable type. Stereotyping serves at least two purposes. It allows the printer or the publisher to print small print runs (say a thousand copies or less at different times at one, two, or even twenty year intervals, if desired) without having to reset the type each time. It also allows the original moveable type to immediately be used again for a different task (for instance, setting a new type form for a different gathering of the same book or for a different book) while the actual printing of the earlier sheet is being done with

the stereotype. There are, however, disadvantages. The printer cannot easily correct mistakes of typesetting (as can be done with the non-plate printing method) because each letter is not a single piece of type. So in-press changes like those that are common in the 1830 edition, and to a lesser extent in the 1837 edition, are not easily made.

The first use of stereotype plates for printing the Book of Mormon was the 1840 edition. With the use of stereotype plates, a new term regarding Book of Mormon printing makes its appearance: *impression*, meaning “printing.” The previous editions, 1830 and 1837, are correctly referred to as *editions*, but with the 1840 publication of the Book of Mormon using stereotype plates, we must be more specific and refer to subsequent printings using these plates as *impressions* or *printings*. This terminology has caused some confusion, because often the words *edition* and *printing* (that is, *impression*) are incorrectly interchanged.

The 1840 edition is known in four different impressions made from plates that were stereotyped in Cincinnati, Ohio. The printing of the first impression

Stereotyping a typeset page



1 A moist sheet of papier-mâché (called a “flong”) is pressed down upon the original typeset form to create an impression of the original type.



2 When the flong has dried, it is placed into a hollow metal frame and covered with a lid. The frame is then screwed tightly together and tilted up vertically.

was begun even before the final stereotype (of the last gathering) was made. That is one of the beauties of the stereotype method. You can be working on the next typesetting project while printing from the new plates. The first printing of the 1840 edition did take place in Cincinnati (although the title page indicates it was published in Nauvoo), and by October of 1840, two thousand copies were bound and in hand. So the 1840 Nauvoo edition could correctly be called the 1840 Cincinnati impression (published in Nauvoo but printed in Cincinnati).

The plates were then taken to Nauvoo, where in the spring of 1841, a new impression of “several hundred copies” was run. A third impression was probably done in early 1842, as suggested by an advertisement in the January and February 1842 issues of the church’s newspaper *Times and Seasons*. Keep in mind that these three impressions all have Nauvoo and 1840 on the title page. They are distinguished as different impressions by a change in the arrangement of the witness pages at the end of the book (pp. 572, 573, and 574). They are also differentiated by a broken

letter and a variation in the paper type. A fourth impression using these stereotype plates was run in Nauvoo in August 1842, with two changes on the title page: the date was changed from 1840 to 1842, and the Jr. from Joseph Smith’s name was dropped because Joseph Smith Sr. had died in September of 1840.

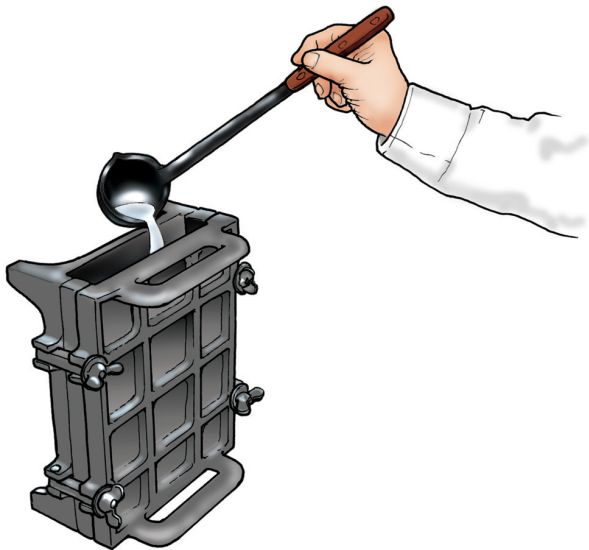
This 1842 impression is also of note because it is much more rare than any of the previous editions or printings of the Book of Mormon. Probably only 640 copies were printed, and few have survived compared to the copies left from the three earlier impressions (of about four thousand printed copies).⁴

The pattern of printing from stereotype plates was now set and would be used time and time again in printing later editions.

1852 Liverpool Edition

The 1852 Liverpool edition was also a stereotype. In his early examinations of this edition in the Historical Department, Royal discovered a second copy that had textual differences from the first 1852 copy. These textual differences were puzzling at first because we did not know how stereotype plates could be “corrected.” It was later discovered that Franklin Richards, at that time president of the British Mission, and his brother Samuel W. Richards did make corrections to the 1852 stereotype. Some were minor corrections in punctuation, but textual corrections were also made by referencing the 1840 edition. However, this use of the 1840 edition was omitted for some gatherings, with the result that the famous “white and delightful” phrase from 2 Nephi 30:6 (the earliest extant reading) did not reappear in the LDS text as “pure and delightful” until the 1981 edition. (By the way, there are only two known copies of the corrected 1852 impression; we only have an uncorrected copy at BYU.)

A brief word on how stereotype plates are corrected may be of interest. Further study of the stereotype method of printing taught us that stereotype plates were commonly corrected. This is done by shaving the offending letter (or letters) off the plate with a chisel-like tool. This can be done because the plates are made of lead, which is relatively soft. Then a hole is drilled through the plate at the spot where the letter was removed and a single piece of regular



3 Molten metal is now poured into the tightened frame to create a precise cast of the original typeset form. When the metal cools, the resulting stereotype is used in the press just like the original typeset form.

type—the correct letter, of course—is placed in the hole, set at the proper height, and soldered into place so that it will not move during printing. Thus corrections to the stereotype plates can and did occur on

a regular basis, although it was much more difficult and time-consuming than with moveable type. Sometimes the corrections were made with pieces of type that did not match the original font, resulting in very obvious and even awkward looking corrections.

The 1852 Liverpool stereotyped edition was the beginning of a long line of impressions: the original uncorrected 1852 followed by the 1852 corrected, two more impressions in 1854, and then the 1866. Sometime in 1870, the plates were shipped from Liverpool to Salt Lake City, thus beginning a series of impressions made in Utah, from 1871 up to 1877.

The printing history of the Book of Mormon is indeed interesting and instructive. I am glad that Royal Skousen began this project and did a proper study and that it is finally nearing completion. I look forward to his later volume on the analysis on the printed editions. I am happy to have had a small part in this project. ■

IMPRESSION	PLACE	STATED EDITION	DATE ON TITLE PAGE
First	Liverpool	Third European	1852
Second	Liverpool	Third European ⁵	1852
Third	Liverpool	Fourth European	1854
Fourth	Liverpool	Fifth European ⁶	1854
Fifth	Liverpool	Sixth European ⁷	1866
Sixth	Salt Lake City		1871
Seventh	Salt Lake City		1874
Eighth	Salt Lake City		1876
Ninth	Salt Lake City		1877

NOTES

1. See Royal Skousen, “John Gilbert’s 1892 Account of the 1830 Printing of the Book of Mormon,” in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000). A transcription of Gilbert’s account appears on pages 400–405.

2. Skousen, “Gilbert’s 1892 Account,” 397.

3. Skousen, “Gilbert’s 1892 Account,” 397. See Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church. Volume One, 1830–1847* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1997), 379 n. 9.

4. For a discussion of the Cincinnati and Nauvoo impressions, see Crawley, entry 83, pp. 129–33, and entry 159, p. 205.

5. This is the 1852 corrected impression. It includes the attribution “Moroni” at the foot of the text on the title page, which was taken from the 1840 edition.

6. The attribution “Moroni” was dropped from the foot of the text on the title page.

7. Hugh Stocks asserts that in addition to the obvious impressions listed here, there was an additional impression, which he dates to about 1870, but which is dated 1866 on the title page. Stocks also asserts the plates were sent to Salt Lake City around 1870, which allowed the beginning of a new series of American impressions. See Hugh G. Stocks, “The Book of Mormon, 1830–1879: A Publishing History” (master’s thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1979), 97–105.