
William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott. *An Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1997. 179p.

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This concise study of bibliographical and textual studies provides a good basis for the beginner and a solid reference for the scholar. William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott's six-chapter book begins with an introductory chapter that defines their purpose as "a guide to how this sort of scholarship has recently been and is now conducted and how its insights, methods, and products can be applied to other branches of scholarship" (4). With this in mind, they define reference, historical, analytical, and descriptive bibliography succinctly and highlight the purpose of each. The remainder of the book expands on these methods and provides a handbook for compiling scholarly bibliographies and editing manuscripts.

Williams and Abbott's discussion of analytical bibliography emphasizes the detective work necessary for scholars to determine printing history. Using physical evidence that includes paper, type, and the printing process itself, they build their case, if you will, with a short description of paper and book making. Their discussion of descriptive bibliography is a good introduction to methods of description, but the book layout, though, should be revised to include the title page figure (39) and the description (40) on the same page or at least on facing pages. There are more graphic illustrations in the glossary than there are in the section about book making. Actually, these sections are the one shortcoming of the book. Since knowledge of these processes of paper and book making is essential to analytical and descriptive bibliography, one chapter exclusively devoted to this, with more graphics, would be of more use to the twenty-first-century audience. Williams and Abbott do, however, provide a rudimentary description of paper and book making as a basis for their discussion of physical evidence, and the section titled "Reading Books" links the book production methods with the terms we use for some genres. Pulp fiction and steam fiction are two terms that prove the importance of these processes.

"A Text and Its Embodiments" includes a wonderful fictionalized illustration of the life of two books, one from the machine-press period (1500-1800) and one from the hand-press period (1801-1950). Williams and Abbott include "as many features as possible of the transmission of texts" to explain how a book can go from the author to the reader (54). Through these fictional lives, they show the impor-

tant changes in the relationships between authors, editors, and compositors/printers.

The last two chapters, “Textual Criticism” and “Editorial Procedure,” discuss one of the most difficult and most hotly debated topics of editing: authorial intent. Williams and Abbot present various sides of the argument concisely, but with sufficient detail to illuminate the nuances of the argument. They also remind us that author intentions are influenced by publishers, editors, family members, friends, and most of all money—something sometimes forgotten. A short discussion of the ever-growing work of web texts, although interesting, needs expansion. The authors do, however, make a cogent argument about the quality, or lack of quality, of editions on the web. Williams and Abbott cite the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) as the guideline for making bibliographical, generic, linguistic, typographical, rhetorical, and formal features of text and then give the Brown Women Writers Project as an exemplary project that uses TEI. This opens the door for a class project defining “good” and “bad” editions sites.

The last portion of the book contains pages of illustrations, an appendix on textual notation, the reference bibliography, and the glossary of terms which are helpful as a compact reference for the novice and the scholar. If Williams and Abbott had included a chapter on book and paper making as complete as the reference pages, this would have been the perfect text to understand the importance of book production. Even so, this introduction to bibliographical and textual studies proves that the history of the book, and the book itself, is far from dead. ❀