American Primers

Guide to the Microfiche Collection
Introductory Essay by Richard L. Venezky
AMERICAN PRIMERS
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NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The editors of UPA, an imprint of Congressional Information Service, wish to give special thanks to the staff of the Educational Research Library of the U.S. Department of Education and the many other librarians and institutions mentioned in the acknowledgments below without whose cooperation this microfiche collection of primers would not have been possible.

This printed guide accompanying the microfiche collection consists of an introductory essay by Richard L. Venezky, Unidel Professor of Educational Studies at the University of Delaware, followed by a reference bibliography section, which provides full bibliographic data for each primer, a combined index of author, illustrator, and publisher names, an index by titles, and a chronological index.
Acknowledgments

A project of this scope would be impossible without the cooperation and assistance of many curators, librarians, and other specialists in rare books, in addition to individual collectors who loaned materials for filming. Many of the materials represented in this collection were subjected to substantial risk of damage in photographing due to their delicate condition; others which we wanted to include were too fragile for photographic handling. We are grateful for the large number of items that could be filmed and fully understanding of the cases where permission was denied. We would like to thank especially Milbrey L. Jones and Joanne S. Cassell who made available to us the textbook collection of the Educational Research Library at the U.S. Department of Education; Marie E. Korey of the Free Library of Philadelphia who not only provided a large and important group of materials but also made available space for filming items from the Philadelphia area; Marcus McCorison and John Hench of the American Antiquarian Society who provided access to most of the 18th century imprints represented here; Peter VanWingen of the Library of Congress for assistance in filming rare items from the Library of Congress special collections; Charles E. Aston, Jr., for his sustained assistance in identifying and filming materials from the Nietz Collection at the University of Pittsburgh Library; James Green of the Library Company of Philadelphia for assistance in obtaining materials from both the Library Company and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Alice Schreyer of the Morris Library at the University of Delaware who provided not only access to rare materials but also encouragement and advice; John Y. Cole at the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress for co-sponsoring and encouraging the project; and Eleanor McD. Thompson of the Winterthur Library, Alan Farstrup and Wendy Wei of the International Reading Association, Nancy Halli of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Hildegard Stephans of the American Philosophical Society, Robert W. Karrow, Jr. of the Newberry Library, John J. Grabowski of the Western Reserve Historical
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From the Indian Primer to Dick and Jane

Primers, spellers and ABC books—fragile, cheap and unaesthetic products of the printing trade—once attracted the attention of the powerful and influential. Martin Luther issued in 1525 the first primer ever written in the German language. In the 17th century George Fox, founder of Quakerism, wrote a speller. Noah Webster in the 18th century wrote both a speller and a reader and Leo Tolstoy in the 19th century wrote an ABC book to teach reading to the sons of the Russian peasants. But for every Luther, Fox, Webster or Tolstoy there have been tens of dozens of lesser known or anonymous authors of introductory reading texts. The authorship of *The New England Primer*, for example, which dominated reading instruction in the American colonies during the 18th century, is not known.

This 3" by 5" pamphlet of fewer than 80 pages contrasts markedly with the present-day pre-primers, primers and readers with their long lists of authors and consultants and their multi-color art and correlated teacher editions. Between these two approaches to introductory reading texts are not only almost three-hundred years in time but radical transformations of culture, education, and commerce. Where colonial printers produced for a local market, modern conglomerates now produce for a national and occasionally international trade. Where a journeyman in 1800 could expect to raise enough capital to buy his own press and print primers, readers and arithmetics without paying royalties or permission fees, millions of dollars are now required for a single mathematics, reading or social studies series.

The evolution of the modern reading textbook is in part the history of American education and in part the history of American culture. No thorough text on this history exists, but various parts of it have been delimited. Nietz (1961, 1966) and Carpenter (1963) cover the general history of American textbooks, focusing on authors and textbook content, with extensive coverage of primers, readers and spellers. General histories of reading texts have been done by Reeder (1900), Lamport (1937), N.B. Smith (1965), and Venezky (1987), while a variety of studies exist on specific textbooks; e.g., the hornbook (Tuer, 1896), *The New England Primer* (Ford, 1899; Watters, 1985/86), Noah Webster's blue-back speller (Monaghan, 1983), McGuffey's readers (Westerhoff, 1978; Lindberg, 1976; Minnich, 1936), and the Dick and Jane readers (Luke, 1988). An important literature also exists on the latent or hidden curriculum of reading textbooks, covering such issues as sexism (Zimet, 1972; Oliver, 1974; Kingston & Lovelace, 1977-78), racism (Bierstedt, 1955), achievement motivation (McClelland, 1961; de Charms & Moeller, 1962), and class (Garfinkle, 1954; Mosier, 1974; Luke, 1977-78).

Parts of this introduction have been adapted from earlier publications of the author, listed in the reference list as Venezky (1987), Venezky (in press-a), and Venezky (in press-b).
1988). Elson (1964) provides an extensive analysis of the themes, images, and attitudes reflected by 19th century readers and spellers, as well as arithmetics, histories, and geographies.

Children's books, which until almost the Civil War were difficult to distinguish from some schoolbooks, have been catalogued for earlier periods by Rosenbach (1933) and Welch (1972). The 20,000+ collection of textbooks in the U.S. Department of Education Research Library has not been completely catalogued, but a sampler catalogue of approximately 5,000 textbook titles was issued recently (Svobodny, 1985). In general, textbooks have been ignored by major libraries; what collections exist are often uncatalogued. Few libraries have attempted to collect complete series or editions so that tracing even as popular a series as the Dick and Jane readers is exceedingly difficult in that no library in the United States appears to have complete collections of each major edition. The Library of Congress and the American Antiquarian Society have extensive holdings of early American textbooks, as does the British Library. Large, well maintained collections can also be found at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut (The Henry Barnard Collection), New York University, Columbia University/Teachers College, Harvard University, the University of Pittsburgh (The Nietz Collection), and selected public libraries including the Free Library of Philadelphia and the New York Public Library. Recent work at the American Antiquarian Society in cataloging into RLIN 19th century children's books, including some textbooks, is providing a model which in time other libraries may follow for processing of textbooks.

The form and content of the primer at any point in its history has been a function of multiple variables. Psychological theory is one: how the mind acquired the components of literacy, linked letters to sounds, recognized words, and assigned meanings to sentences, paragraphs and texts. When psychology was derived from theology, the child's mind was viewed as a miniature adult mind, held back by recalcitrance and a propensity to wander near the clutches of the devil. Heavy doses of adult ideas and language were the resulting prescription, forced into the infantile colonial head by rote memorization and stern admonishment. From Rousseau and Pestalozzi came a different view of development, beginning with a blank slate onto which the child could slowly acquire, with sufficient interest, names, facts, and finally higher levels of understanding. For this new psychology, early reading assumed the garb of the child's world, offering familiar objects and simple, controlled language.

But primers are also commercial products and the nature of the printing and publishing trade has strongly influenced what has reached the young reader's hands. Local markets and small press runs allowed wide variety in texts in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries, but the strained economics of the early American press limited this variability to what was inexpensive to produce. With the rise of the textbooks publishing giants in the mid 19th century emerged a slicker, more professional primer design, but the need to compete in a national market lead quickly to homogenization. With the graded school the primer lost its last vestige of independence, being absorbed as one of many steps in the
reading series that have evolved into the modern basal.

Comingled with psychological theory and commercial interest has been a third and more elusive variable that has influenced primer design and that is hegemony or authority. For most of the colonial period, at least in New England, the Puritan Church exercised authority over everyday life. Its interests in literacy were expressed through *The New England Primer*, with its authorized catechism and other theological readings. With the breakdown in the church's authority, a more secular but nevertheless Protestant primer appeared. Through the 19th century authority in educational matters was contested by reformist educators, conservative ministers, lawyers, and the like, and finally captains of the textbook trade, who by the third quarter of the 19th century assumed a limited control over most of the school textbooks.

Authority today continues to be vested with the textbook publishers, who have gained the cooperation and compliance of school administrators and college level educators. But more and more this hegemony has been challenged by special interest groups and by state departments of education who through their curriculum guidelines have begun to influence textbook content. Limited now by state boundaries, these distributed centers of control could, through regional or national confederation, seriously challenge the publishers' hegemony. How all these factors have woven in and out of primers, spellers, ABC books and the other instruments of initial reading instruction is the concern of the remainder of this introduction.

The colonial period

The evolution of the modern reading textbook can be traced through at least five distinct periods: colonial (1639-1782), early national (1783-1837), pre-Civil War (1838-1865), early modern (1866-1920), and modern (1921-). Although one of the earliest books printed in the Colonies was a primer for use in teaching literacy and Christianity to Indians (John Eliot's *Indian Primer*, 1669), most textbooks during the colonial period were imported from England; what few were produced in the Colonies (e.g., Cheever's *A Short Introduction to the Latin Tongue*, 1737) were based upon English models. Printing facilities and paper making were limited in the Colonies and imported paper was expensive. The cost of shipping goods over land was also expensive, constraining the distribution of printed materials. Some writers even sent manuscripts to England for printing and then imported the books back into the Colonies. An example of this was Hugh Jones, who wrote a grammar for the Colonies in 1724, but sent it to England for printing (Nietz, 1961). (The first grammar to be written and printed in the Colonies was done by Samuel Johnson, first president of Kings College in New York City.)

Although the basic tone of textbooks was highly religious throughout most of this period, the secularization of colonial society that began before the middle of the 18th century was reflected in particular in reader content. Primers
less devotional than *The New England Primer*, at first imported from England (e.g., *The Royal Primer*), began to appear by 1750. At the same time children's books in England began to reflect John Locke's idea that reading "Be never made a task." Beginning with Mary Cooper's *The Child's New Play-thing* (2nd ed., 1743) and continuing with John Newbery's juvenile publications, books for young learners made learning to read a diversion rather than a stern heavenly admonition (Welch, 1972). Non-biblical story books, for use outside of school, were printed in the Colonies as early as 1756 (*A New Gift for Children*). This trend towards friendly, child-like content for children's books competed with the Calvinist tradition throughout the second half of the 18th century, but by the beginning of the 19th century when *The New England Primer* began to fade in popularity, became the dominant influence for primers, ABC books, and other introductory reading materials.

Nevertheless, *The New England Primer*, which appeared in hundreds of editions (and under dozens of titles), retained its popularity during the colonial period and was reprinted in a variety of editions almost to the end of the 19th century. As its popularity waned, nostalgic collections of its illustrations and texts were issued as * Beauties of the New England Primer*. *The New England Primer*, however, was much less a guide to reading than it was a religious document in which the Calvinist views of the child and of human disobedience to the authority of God were expounded. "The text of the Primer developed at the time of a crisis of authority in New England, involving...the transition from colony to province, and in most general terms, much of the Primer defines for the child his or her place in relation to parental, civil and religious authority figures" (Walters, 1985/86, p. 193).

Although most writers date *The New England Primer* to the end of the 17th century, Walters (*ibid.*, pp.208f) points out that no concrete evidence of pre-18th century editions exists. The references to the *Primer* in the Stationer's Registry and in advertisements before 1700 may have been to a related text, John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk for American Babes*. Like Webster's *Speller* and the *McGuffey Readers*, *The New England Primer* was radically revised during its lifetime, the most dramatic being in the 1750s, in response (perhaps) to the Great Awakening. The earliest surviving example of the *Primer* was printed in 1727; however, given the fragility of the text and the relatively low survival rate of colonial print materials, that date cannot be accepted with confidence as the first printing of the text. (See Heartman, 1934, 1935 for an inventory of all imprints of both New England and non-New England primers identified up to the mid 1930s.)

Second in popularity to the primer was the speller, which gained acceptance in the colonial schools after the middle of the 18th century. Although a speller may have been printed in Cambridge in 1643, no copies have survived. Until Noah Webster published his speller in 1783, English spellers dominated the American market, led by Thomas Dilworth's *New Guide to the English Tongue* and to a lesser degree Daniel Fenning's *Universal Spelling Book*, both of which served as models for Webster (Monaghan, 1983). Since no international
copyright law was adopted in America until the end of the 19th century, foreign textbooks could be reprinted here without payment of fees. Consequently, while the English publishers continued to export their textbooks to America and to advertise in American newspapers, numerous editions of the English texts were issued from American presses. Benjamin Franklin, for example, printed an edition of Dilworth’s *Guide* in 1747; between 1765 and 1771 nine editions are known to have been printed by various American presses (Monaghan, 1983). According to R. Smith (1979), at least 76 editions of Dilworth’s *Guide* were issued in America before 1801.

**The early national period**

With the American Revolution and independence began a period of American production of textbooks, almost all of which were infused with intense nationalism. Noah Webster’s *Speller* (1783), Jedidiah Morse’s *Geography* (1783) and Caleb Bingham’s *American Preceptor* (1794) were prominent examples of the new nationalism, but others followed. For example, Erastus Root, in his *Introduction to Arithmetic* (1796), urged the replacement of the English money system with that of America’s (Curti, 1959). Nevertheless, textbooks continued to be imported from England and some like Lindley Murray’s *Readers* captured a major share of the American market. Packer (1954), drawing on *The Boston Booksellers’ Catalogue of 1804*, estimates that in the textbooks advertised for sale in 1804, English authors still represented 25% of the total. Webster’s speller, first published in 1783 as *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language, Part I*, became the best selling American textbook in the last part of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century. Part II of *A Grammatical Institute* was a grammar and Part III was a reader, first issued in 1785 and then revised in 1787 and retitled *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking*. This was probably the first true reader issued in the United States, but it met strong competition from other readers that soon followed. Among the more popular of the competing readers were Caleb Bingham’s *Child’s Companion* (1792), *Columbian Orator* (1797), and *American Preceptor* (1794), and Lindley Murray’s *English Reader* (1799), *Sequel to the English Reader* (1801), and *Introduction to the English Reader* (1805).

The transition from religious to secular textbooks continued through the initial part of this period and was particularly evident in the sales of *The New England Primer*, which was rapidly replaced by more secular primers that were devoted exclusively to reading instruction. “This secularization [1790-1800] was an attack by its friends from which the book never quite recovered, for the printers having once found how much more saleable such primers were, and parents having found how much more readily their children learned, both united in encouraging more popular school-books, and very quickly illustrated primers, which aimed to please rather than to torture, were multiplied” (Ford, 1899, pp. 109ff). Nevertheless, tradition held strong in the New England countryside and as late as the period 1836-1850, over 50,000 copies of *The New England Primer*
were printed and sold (Tebbel, 1972).

During the early national period the content of many reading textbooks began to shift from an emphasis on classical learning to an emphasis on more modern learning. Regional interests were more strongly expressed, especially in texts like the early editions of the *McGuffey Readers*, which were initially produced for western and southern markets, but with popularity shed their regional guise (Venezky, 1987). Other popular regional texts included James Hall’s *Western Reader* (Cincinnati, 1833), *The Western Primer* (Columbus, 1837) and *The Western Farmer’s Almanac* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1845).

The people who authored major textbooks during the early national period were mostly from New England, highly educated, overwhelmingly Protestant, and classically oriented (Belok, 1973). Most were not authors, but rather compilers who often gave no credit to the sources from which they borrowed extracts. John M’Culloch, for example, who compiled the first American history text (1795), borrowed lengthy extracts without permission or attribution from Jedidiah Morse’s *Geography Made Easy* (1844) (Spieseke, 1938). Their attitudes towards religions other than their own was at best intolerant. “It is not surprising to find these early school-books taking a very intolerant attitude toward Catholics and other major religions. The word ‘papist’ was freely strewn throughout the books, and generally the references were in the pejorative sense. Most religions were divided into Christians and pagans. . .The seeds of ‘know-nothingism’ and America’s fear of conspiracy were probably sown quite early” (Belok, ibid., pp.64f). Elson (1964) found this same attitude towards non-Protestant religions continuing throughout almost the entire 19th century.

As the American economy began to grow at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the printing business expanded rapidly. Among the printers who developed successful textbook businesses in the early 19th century was Samuel Wood of New York City. Although unknown in modern histories of reading instruction, he was New York City’s most important publisher of children’s books in the first half of the 19th century, the compiler of the first graded series of readers, and an important Quaker publisher and educator (Wood, 1904; Weiss, 1942). He is important here, however, because of his graded reading series and his highly popular and often duplicated ABC book, *The Young Child’s A,B,C*, which was first published in 1806.

Other publishers such as Mathew Carey in Philadelphia and Isaac Collins in Trenton had issued their own primers or ABC books; these were the staples of the colonial and early national press, along with business forms, almanacs, sermons, handbooks, and stationery (Lehmann-Haupt, 1952). But Samuel Wood was the first publisher to compile a complete series of school books, and he did not one but two such series in the first two decades of the 19th century. The first series, consisting of *The Young Child’s A,B,C; or First Book*, *The New York Primer*, *The New York Preceptor*, *The New York Speller*, and *The New York Expositor*, was issued between 1806 and 1810. The second series, consisting of *The New York Reader, Nos. 1-3*, was issued in the period 1812-15, and was the first true series of graded readers ever compiled. Other authors, like Lindley
Murray, had written reading texts with different levels of difficulty, but none of these was planned as a complete series.

Wood issued his graded series at a time when New York City had no public schools (Kaestle, 1973). The few that did exist were charity schools, operated by church groups for children of the poor. The Lancastrian charity schools which were sponsored by the Society of Friends may have been Wood’s initial market, and the rigid monitorial system used in these schools, with its well-defined levels of reading ability, may have been the initial impetus for a graded series of textbooks. In part through the employment of such skilled illustrators as Alexander Anderson, and in part through careful press work, Wood quickly acquired a reputation for quality printing (Weiss, 1942). He had entered the printing business at a time when the distinction between printer and publisher did not exist and when a business could be started with a small amount of capital. An apprentice could expect to move up to journeyman and quickly establish his own business.

But before Wood retired in 1836 the printing trade had begun a radical transformation, driven by technological innovation. As a result of paper making machinery, stereotyping, ink rollers, the steam press, and a variety of other inventions, journeymen and many apprentices were eliminated from the production side of printing. In parallel, the high cost of new machinery reduced the ability of most journeymen to establish their own businesses. The magnitude of the change brought by technology is illustrated by developments in printing presses. The handpress, which remained basically the same from Gutenberg through the early 19th century, was operated by a pair of journeymen and could produce under skilled effort at most 250 impressions per hour. In contrast, the steam press which was perfected in the 1830s could be operated by low paid boys and girls and could produce 3,000 impressions per hour (Rorabaugh, 1986, p. 86).

Then, newly built canals and roads allowed publishers to operate profitably over a larger territory than before, thus leading to a further squeeze on the small, local printing and publishing houses. Although the hand-operated press would continue to survive for several more decades in the countryside, the city printing establishments that were solvent were those with modern equipment. Because of the high start up costs for a printing business, printing became more and more separated from publishing, except for a small number of large houses. The publishers who were well financed took over the roles of promoters, editors, and marketers, leaving only the dirty work of book production to the printers.

The great leap forward in American printing was marked also by a radically reduced dependence upon British imports. In 1820, for example, almost 70% of all books sold in the United States were printed in England. By 1850 the figures were reversed, with 70% of the books sold originating in the U.S. (Trubner, 1859, p. 90). At the same time, the common school movement, engineered by Mann, Barnard, et al., was forcing educational expansion, which led to a vastly increased market for readers and other school texts, but one which also organized itself quickly to favor the larger publishers over the smaller ones. Wood’s textbooks,
whatever their appeal when they were published in the early part of the 19th century, were not revised to keep up with changing attitudes and tastes, and consequently were only marginally competitive by the 1840s.

As was traditional in Quaker texts, Wood’s readers had no truck with fiction, theater, fairy tales, or military adventures, even those as ennobling as the American Revolution (Frost, 1973; Wright, 1932). In contrast to a later (and continuing) tradition, Wood’s reading selections reflected what he felt children should read rather than what he assumed the populace would buy. His books continued to sell, nevertheless, through his bookstore, by exchange with other printers, and through the Quaker network that connected via Monthly and Yearly Meetings to Quaker businesses and schools over the entire Northeast.

After Samuel Wood’s retirement, the firm passed to his sons, and then to a grandson, and finally to a great grandson before it was absorbed by a larger house during the Depression. Rights to almost all of the reading texts were sold in the 1860s; the acquiring firm advertised a new printing of the New York Readers, but no such imprints have been found and I suspect none was issued. Samuel Wood died in 1844, his contribution to the American reading script generally unrecognized.

The pre-Civil War period

By the 1820s reading was taught from a variety of different materials, beginning with toy books and ABCs that were used primarily in the home, to primers, spellers, readers, and expositors which were used in the schools. Some spellers after 1820 reduced their focus on reading, but others did not. In contrast, many primers and readers attempted to teach both reading and spelling. Among the more popular texts of this period were Albert Picket’s Juvenile Spelling Book (1821) and Primer (1836); John Pierpont’s Introduction to the National Reader (1828), National Reader (1828), and Young Reader (1830); and B.D. Emerson’s Third Class, Second-Class, and First-Class Reader (1834). From the time of Wood’s New York Readers until 1830, no other graded series of readers was published. Then, a number of series appeared in succession, including Oliver Angell’s Union series (1830-1834), Lyman Cobb’s Juvenile readers (1830-1835), and the Emerson texts just mentioned. By the 1840s larger schools were adopting readers in series, thus reinforcing what was to be from then on the standard configuration for producing reading books. Nevertheless, what is most striking about the period from the 1820s until about the Civil War was the coexistence of different types of reading texts: readers in series and independent readers; old-time, omnibus spellers, and newer, restricted spellers; religious primers and secular primers; and ABC books with a Puritan ethic alongside ABC books with purely child-interest content. These variations were a reflection of a country in transition, from rural to urban, from farming to industry, from moralism to materialism, and from local, one-room schools to larger, egg-crate style schools.

With the spread of the common school movement in the 1830s and 1840s, textbook publishing became a major independent business, complete with
specialized publishing houses and separate sales forces. Truman, Smith & Co., incorporated in Cincinnati in 1833, was one of the first firms to make a major investment in schoolbooks and rose within two and a half decades to be the largest schoolbook publishing house in America (Sutton, 1961). Two of its earliest products, Joseph Ray's arithmetics and the McGuffey readers, sold over 100 million copies each in their life times and made millionaires out of a number of corporate executives. With expanding educational markets, more publishing houses began to specialize in textbooks, and with many school systems establishing district-wide textbook adoptions, many of the forces that drive the current textbook trade were established.

By the time that Samuel Wood retired from publishing, the capital of the Western book trade had shifted to Cincinnati, where the McGuffey Readers originated (Sutton, 1961). The author of these readers, William Holmes McGuffey, has been as over-popularized in this century as Samuel Wood has been ignored. But the true McGuffey reader story is not in the dour, Calvinistic William Holmes McGuffey, but the astute manager and marketeer, Winthrop B. Smith, the originator of the idea for and the first publisher of the McGuffey series. This is also the story of the ascendancy of the large textbook publishing houses in America, the Goliaths of the trade, and the commercialization of elementary education.

Book publishing in America increased rapidly in volume and in dollars through the 19th century as discretionary money and time increased for private citizens and as schooling opportunities expanded. In 1820, for example, the total value of book production was estimated to be $2.5 million; by 1840 this had increased to $5.5m., and by 1850 to $12.5m. (Trubner, 1859, pp. 89-90). This is a five fold increase in dollar value over a period in which the population increased by only half that ratio. Of this total, schoolbooks accounted for about one-third. Textbooks by the 1850s were purchased by some school districts, rather than just by parents and individual school masters, and readers were issued more frequently in graded series as the large urban schools with age graded classrooms became more common.

Winthrop B. Smith came to Cincinnati in 1830 and with William T. Truman organized in 1833 the publishing firm Truman, Smith & Co. which a year later changed its name to Truman & Smith. From the beginning Smith was the innovative and entrepreneurial member of the ownership team. The idea for an eclectic series of textbooks apparently occurred shortly after the firm was organized. Joseph Ray, a local mathematics teacher, was commissioned to write an arithmetic text, which appeared in 1834 as the Eclectic Arithmetic and became an immediate success. A sequel to this text, Ray's Practical Arithmetic, published by Truman & Smith three years later, was the most successful text of its kind in the 19th century and continued to sell even into this century (Carpenter, 1963).

After the first edition of Ray's arithmetic was published, Smith approached Catherine Beecher, sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe and founder of a local female academy, to write a series of readers. She was unwilling to divert her attention from the academy, but recommended a family friend, William Holmes McGuf-
fey, who was then a professor at Cincinnati College. Between 1836 and 1838 a primer, four readers, and a speller were produced by William and his younger brother, Alexander Hamilton McGuffey. A fifth reader was added in 1844, a sixth in 1857 and a high school reader in 1863. Of these texts, there is evidence that the younger brother wrote the 5th, 6th, and high school readers, and may also have written the 4th reader (Sullivan, 1927, p. 19fn). The primer was a commercial failure and was withdrawn soon after it was introduced. William Holmes McGuffey, therefore, wrote only three of the more popular texts for sure, and possibly a fourth.

The Eclectic Reading Series was billed as a regional product, free from effete and other eastern maladies, but not long after its launching the publishers of the Worcester readers brought suit against McGuffey and his publishers, claiming "over-imitation" and violation of copyright—all in the texts that William Holmes McGuffey wrote. Although the suit was settled out of court, the case against McGuffey was quite convincing by modern standards (Venezky, 1987). Minor changes were made to the 2nd and 3rd readers to eliminate the most flagrant evidence of pirating and the series continued on its way, in time becoming the most widely used readers in American history. The regional orientation was dropped in the 1840s as a national market developed. By the 1880s over 3 million copies per year were being sold; even in the first decades of the 20th century, when the series was long out of date, over 49 different McGuffey titles were stocked and sold by its publisher.

In the evolution of the American reading script, the McGuffey readers represent several major transitions, the most important of which was the use of a highly aggressive marketing strategy, backed by frequent revisions to appeal to changing tastes and to compete with new materials brought out by other publishers. The Puritan orientation of William Holmes McGuffey, with its emphasis on original sin and its stern attention to Biblical admonitions, was quickly weeded out, in favor of play, materialism, and other pursuits more palatable to the ever more earthly 19th century middle class (Westerhoff, 1978). Major revisions were done in 1838, 1844, 1853, 1857, and 1879 with minor revisions in many of the intervening years. Selections were tried in one or two editions, sometimes moved to another grade level or, more often, replaced. Of the 1067 selections which appeared across all editions of the 4th, 5th, and 6th readers, 607 appear in only one edition (Nietz, 1964). These revisions were directed from within the publishing house; McGuffey played some role in the 1844 changes, but had no further influence, direct or indirect, on the series.

The criteria for keeping or replacing a selection had little to do with educational value. Popular tastes, as reflected by adult social norms, dictated the McGuffey selection process as strongly as it influences reader content today. For the early 19th century texts a canon of sorts existed, centered around religion, morality, and nationalism. But as the country matured and Protestantism shifted from morality to materialism, the older constraints on reader content dissolved. By the end of the century good literature would be the main guideline and the need to change selections frequently to appeal to changing tastes would in-
crease. Books that once instructed and guided, albeit narrowly, now merely entertained.

The second change was the inclusion of a lesson plan, which included vocabulary and pronunciation activities before reading a selection, and comprehension questions and articulation exercises afterwards. This was a step towards a fully scripted teaching guide, but not yet of the form seen today. The introduction to the 3rd reader (McGuffey, 1840, p. 10) qualifies that "The questions appended to each lesson are... designed to suggest rather than to direct the interrogative method of oral instruction." The lesson plan built around a reading selection originated with Samuel Worcester, whose 1826 primer was probably the most innovative reading text of the 19th century. Worcester included not only a sequence of steps for teaching the lesson, but also gave extensive teaching suggestions. It was Worcester's model that McGuffey cribbed, along with many of Worcester's selections, and it was Worcester and his publishers who brought suit against the McGuffey gang.

The inclusion of a lesson plan reflects the pedagogical influence of the Pestalozzian schools, with their carefully sequenced lessons. But the desire to include any instructional apparatus appears to derive mostly from the need to distinguish a product in a marketplace overrun with primers and readers. It is ironic that from the 19th century on, as teachers were better and better trained, the reading textbooks treated them as less and less competent by increasing the explicitness of the teaching instructions.

The early modern period

With the conclusion of the Civil War textbook publishing expanded rapidly. "The tremendous surge of education after the Civil War had created a record demand for textbooks, which had brought the new firms into being and compelled the older ones either to expand the sales forces or get out of the business... Textbook companies had at least 300 agents in the field by 1868, and the number was growing every year" (Tebbel, 1975, p. 560). Reading series began to appear nearly as they do today, with a primer, five or six graded readers, and occasionally a speller, which by the end of the 19th century was issued independently of the reading series. The McGuffey readers continued to capture a large share of the reading market, particularly in the West and South, but had to compete with a number of other series that had also been originally published before the Civil War, including the Sanders readers and the Hillard readers.

Perhaps the most successful of the series issued after the Civil War was the Appleton School Readers, authored by William Torrey Harris, Andrew Jackson Rickoff, and Mark Bailey. This series represents what is probably the first modern, corporately sponsored reading program. The authors were all highly visible educational figures, selected to represent different regions of the country, different expertise in education, and at least with the first two, to facilitate entry into major school systems. Harris was well known at the time, not only as the Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis, but also as an educa-
tional philosopher and founder of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. He was appointed United States Commissioner of Education in 1889 and served ably in that position for seventeen years (Neitz, 1961). Rickoff had been a president of the National Teachers' Association (later, National Education Association) and at the time the series was designed was superintendent of schools in Cleveland, Ohio where his innovations in teacher training and school design, and his promotion of women into school principalships earned him national recognition. Bailey was an instructor of elocution at Yale University and the author of several monographs on public speaking.

The series was first published in 1877-78 and consisted originally of five readers. In time an introductory fourth reader was added, apparently because the original fourth reader was too difficult to follow immediately after the third. As was typical of readers of this period, the teacher was told that the series could be used with any of the current reading methods, but the authors did recommend that the best approach would be a “judicious combination of the word and phonics methods” (cited in Nietz, *ibid.*, p. 96). The books were well illustrated for their time and the contents represented an interesting compromise between the elocutionary emphasis of the pre Civil War series and the growing new emphasis on good literature.

Among the more successful of the solitary authors of reading texts issued after the Civil War was Lewis Baxter Monroe, Superintendent of Physical and Vocal Culture in the Boston Public Schools, founder and dean of the Boston University School of Oratory, and compiler of the *Monroe Readers*, an important reading series that was completed in the year that McGuffey died. The *Monroe Readers* mark the last gasp for reading instruction built around oral reading and elocutionary principles, and with their accompanying teacher guide, the last step in the development of the scripted lesson plan. Monroe also represents the demise of the author-initiated reading series. Other authors would set out on their own to develop reading programs, but by the 1870s the dominant development technique was through publisher-initiated projects.

Beginning in the early 1870s Monroe published, probably with his wife's assistance, the first of the *Monroe Readers*. An anonymous reviewer in the *Chicago Schoolmaster* praised the choice of selections in the first of the series to appear, stating that “The book abounds in lessons requiring naturalness of tone, and has but few of ‘The Raven’ class by which stilted methods of expression are taught” ("Books Received", 1871, p. 329). In all, the series consisted of a primer, six graded readers, a speller, wall charts, and (in time) a teacher text entitled *How to Teach Reading*, which was written by Monroe's wife (Mrs. L.B. Monroe, 1888). This teacher text is one of the earliest ever published to accompany a series of readers, giving suggestions and often complete scripts for readiness activities, phonics lessons, oral reading exercises, and integration of speaking and writing into reading. The degree of scripting is characterized by passages like the following: “Then the teacher should proceed according to directions on Chart 4: ‘Children, when you see this letter with three up-and-down lines in it, you should call it thus;' and the teacher makes the sound of
m with closed lips’’ (Ibid., p.11).

The series is considered among the ten or so most popular for its time by Nietzsche (1961, pp. 94-5), with a single revision occurring in 1883-84, under direction of Monroe's widow. A day book from the original publisher, Cowperthwait & Co., shows that as late as 1890 copies were being sold frequently throughout the East and Midwest. But the consolidation of the publishing industry that began in the late 1880s led to Cowperthwait’s list being taken over by another Philadelphia publisher, E. H. Butler & Co., who then merged with Sheldon & Co., to form Butler, Sheldon, & Co. The new company sold out after the turn of the century to the new colossus of the publishing trade, the American Book Co., thus bringing the Monroe Readers under the same corporate ownership as the McGuffey Readers and about 15 other readers obtained through mergers and buy-outs (Tebbel, 1975). The Monroe Readers continued to sell into the 20th century, but barely so. Surviving correspondence with Mrs. Monroe discusses copyright renewals for some of the texts in 1916, but also shows that the publisher wished to engage in no further revisions.

At the end of the 19th century silent reading began to replace oral reading in the school curriculum, leading to longer reading selections in the readers, chosen for their literary rather than their oratorical features. At the same time the sections on elocution that generally appeared in the fifth or sixth readers began to disappear and reader titles like Elocutionary Guide were quietly dropped. Monroe's untimely death in 1879 did not begin the demise of elocution and oral reading; that was already evident by the end of the Civil War (Baskerville, 1979, p. 19). The contrast at the Gettysburg cemetery dedication between Edward Everett’s two-hour oration, patterned on Pericle's funeral oration for the fallen of Athens and Lincoln's ten-sentence address, uttered in plain style in barely three minutes, was not lost on the generation which dominated American life after the Civil War (Brann, 1976).

By the end of the 19th century good literature had become the basis of the readers, replacing moral, didactic selections and platform pieces. Experimental psychology and the child study movement began to influence initial reading instruction, creating among other changes a move towards an extended period of readiness before reading instruction began. In the first quarter of the 20th century, as the various readers became associated with grade levels, a pre-primer was added to most series to teach the vocabulary of the primer. The teacher’s manual, which became standard for reading series by the end of the 19th century, grew rapidly in size. Even before World War I the bulk of the guide was a concern of publishers. The authors of the 219-page manual for the primer and the first three readers of the Aldine series, speaking perhaps for all series, wrote, “The size of this manual is not due to any difficulty in the method described; the method is exceedingly easy both to comprehend and to apply” (Spaulding & Bryce, 1907, p. iii).
The modern period

Following World War I, a further consolidation took place in the textbook trade as smaller companies continued to be bought up by larger ones. Publishing was centered primarily in New York in the East and Chicago in the Midwest, with a small number of firms still located in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Cincinnati. The modern basal reading series assumed the form that is seen today during this period and mathematics, social studies and science series followed. The rapid expansion of the high school system, particularly after the beginning of the 20th century provided a new market for textbooks, but not as appreciable as the elementary market.

Educational psychology, which declared its independence from general psychology after the first decade of the 20th century, had a strong impact on the school curriculum after World War I, particularly through tests and testing. With standardized reading tests, silent reading was established in the curriculum and comprehension began to receive the attention it deserved. Thorndike's scientific education, coupled with the results of experimental studies of eye movements, perceptual span, and other processing features of reading began to be acknowledged in the teaching guides and to be reflected in the reading exercises. The preface to the Beacon Gate to Reading, as an example, explains to the teacher "Recognizing the eye as a highly important agent in the reading process, the authors have worked out, in the light of the studies and research of recent years, exercises intended to develop focal fields, wider perceptual spans, and eye-sweeps from left to right, and to reduce to the minimum eye-pauses and eye regressions" (Sullivan & Cox, 1926, p. iii). Whether we should cheer the rapid integration of research results into practice or bemoan the naive leap from laboratory into classroom without intervention of instructional testing is not altogether obvious here. Nevertheless, until recently American reading educators were entrenched in their belief that laboratory studies should have a major impact on classroom practice, regretting only that research was not more quickly adopted into instruction.

The final steps in the formation of the modern reading series came in the 1920s and 1930s as more books were added to the typical series and as stricter controls over vocabulary and syntax were adopted into the reading selections, particularly in the lowest reading levels. The Dick and Jane series, issued by Scott, Foresman & Co. in the 1930s, was responsible for many of these changes and remains today as the proto-typical American reading program of the 20th century. Its popularity in the grade schools through the 1930s and 1940s rivalled that of The New England Primer and the McGuffey readers in their times and its impact on the industry was just as great.

Scott, Foresman & Co. was founded in Chicago in 1896 by E.H. Scott and W.C. & H. Foresman, specifically for textbook publishing. Before the end of the century it acquired The Student Series, a sequence of three readers originally published by Geo. Sherwood & Co., and issued revised editions. The progenitors of the Dick and Jane series, however, were the Elson readers, which began in
1914 with the *Elson-Runkel Primer*, and continued over the next few years with a complete reading series to complement on the primary and early elementary levels the *Elson Grammar School Readers* which had already been published for grades 5 through 8. The Elson readers included the first pre-primer ever published and also an extension or supplementary series entitled the *Child Library Readers*. This series was highly successful and continued to be revised through the 1920s. In 1927 a mechanical revision brought in the first pupil workbooks.

In 1930 William S. Gray, a renowned educational psychologist and reading authority from the University of Chicago became a senior co-author with William H. Elson in creating the Dick and Jane series, first issued as the *Elson Basic Readers* in 1930-31. This was the first reading series to enforce strict vocabulary control over selections. Dick and Jane appeared in the pre-primer, but not in its original title. In 1934 the pre-primer was retitled *Dick and Jane* and a second pre-primer, *More Dick and Jane Stories*, was added. Two years later a further revision was done and the series title changed to the *Elson-Gray Basic Readers*, to acknowledge Gray's true role in the series design. Further revisions were done on this series into the 1960s, including ethnic integration into what had been strictly white, middle-class environments in the stories, and copies continued to be sold in the 1970s from warehouse stock.

**Notes on the Collection**

The Primer collection contains a variety of different types of introductory reading materials, spanning the periods just described. A few items issued after the mid 1930s are included, the latest being a 1943 reading text by I.A. Richards (527). Only books or book-like imprints are included, thus excluding hornbooks, broadsides, charts, reading cards, and battledores. Reading charts in reduced book form, however, are represented (e.g., 587), as are chart primers (78, 108, 109), which became popular in the latter part of the 19th century. (For information on hornbooks, see Tuer, 1899.) In general, only American imprints are represented; a few exceptions have been made for (1) English imprints that were imported in quantity into the Colonies and which were models for later American textbooks (e.g., 682, 664), and (2) Canadian imprints of special interest for Native American adaptations (89) and for phonic instruction methods (520). Several imprints (e.g., 515) are from English publishers, but jointly published in the United States. Included among the "American" imprints are two native language readers from Hawaii (756, 595) and one Dutch primer printed in Barby for use on St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John (825).

Almost all materials were intended for use with children. The exceptions are an evening school reader, intended for high school instruction (364), two readers for illiterate soldiers in World War I (528, 529), and two readers for general adult education (438, 576). Three of these latter textbooks were authored by Cora Wilson Stewart, based upon her work with the "Moonlight" schools for illiterate adults in Kentucky. Except for No. 438, which was copyrighted in
1931, all of these adult literacy materials date from just before or during World War I. No special effort was made to locate texts for adult literacy instruction. The ones included here represent the primer/first reader models, adapted for adult interests.

The main types of materials included are primers, readers, spelling books, alphabet books, teaching manuals, and non-instructional juveniles. A small number of less common items are grouped in a miscellaneous class. Primers include only those imprints labeled as such, for example, The New England Primer, The Columbian Primer, Sander’s Union Pictorial Primer. In this class are the early religious style primers, such as The New England Primer and its various imitations, the secular primer that became popular at the beginning of the 19th century, and the later primers that formed the first parts of the graded reading series. Some primers were indistinguishable from alphabet books, but generally they were longer and contained more extensive examples of connected text.

Readers form the largest class of items, consisting of the single readers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as well as the various graded readers that became popular in the 1820s. Where graded series existed, generally only the first reader was selected. Exceptions were made, however, for a few rarer second readers such as The Deseret Second Book, issued along with The Deseret First Book in the Mormon phonetic alphabet by the University of Utah Press in 1868 (367, 629), and Samuel Worcester Second Book for Reading and Spelling (660) that represents the first reading series based upon the word method. The Second Book is actually the first reader, following the Primer (782). Two publisher specimen books have also been included, showing sample pages from complete reading series (136, 459).

Over 50 spelling books have been included, representing imprints of this form that were intended for reading as well as spelling instruction. These include several 18th century imprints (e.g., 672, 682) which were omnibus schoolbooks, teaching reading, spelling, religion, geography, and a little arithmetic, plus a sampling of 19th century imprints that show the transition to separate speller as part of a graded reading series (e.g., 651, 12, 585, 573). Within this latter group are two representatives (807, 811) of the 41 Confederate spellers listed in the Parrish & Willingham (1987) list of Confederate imprints.

Alphabet books were often indistinguishable from primers, although some authors and printers clearly separated the two. ABC books were rarely copyrighted and often issued without date of publication or attribution of authorship. Rhymes and artwork were freely borrowed. Some were as short as 8 pages in length, others were longer, extending in some cases to 32 pages.

Over a dozen teaching manuals have been included to illustrate the intended usage of primers and readers (e.g., 264, 577). A complete history of teacher suggestions, however, should start with the footnotes in the 18th century spellers and continue through such texts as Samuel Worcester’s Primer, which was the first to include extensive suggestions for teaching (782). Separate manuals first appear in the late 19th century, usually with a single guide for three or more
texts in a graded series. By the early 1920s, separate guides are issued for each level.

Non-instructive juveniles represent a significant class of materials that were published for children who were just learning to read. These lacked the heavy didactic style of primers, readers, and the like, yet attempted to interest children in books and reading. Most are illustrated and all attempt to be interesting to children, often bearing such alluring titles as *Present for Children* (773), *Book of Pictures and Verses* (801), and *Little Verses for Good Children* (803). Some are more explicit about reading level; e.g., *The Young Child's Picture Book in Words of One Syllable* (810), *Little Harry's Ladder to Learning* (685).

The miscellaneous class includes everything meant for initial reading, but not falling into the classes just described. Included here are content area readers such as *The Geographical Reader for Dixie Children*, issued in 1862 in the Confederacy (818), in which the first part is meant for teaching reading while the second is devoted to geography; two nature readers (127, 176); and history (182), health (542), and science (158) readers plus an additional geography reader (489). Another representative of this class is *American Popular Lessons* (677), copyrighted in 1829 and consisting mostly of moral pieces for "younger classes of children in schools."

Materials have been selected to illustrate features of not only pedagogy but also book design, publishing and book selling. Multiple editions of particular texts have been included where particular features of publishing history can be portrayed, such as the succession of publishers who issued the same text or the pirating of texts even after the first U.S. copyright law was passed in 1790. With particularly important texts such as Samuel Wood's *Young Child's A,B,C*, or the *McGuffey Readers*, successive editions have been included to illustrate the progression of changes that characterized different imprints. For example, four different Wood imprints of the *Young Child's A,B,C* are included from the first quarter of the 19th century, representing three different titles for the Wood publishing company and three slightly different forms of the text and its illustrations (814, 683, 704, 642). Also included are three imprints of exactly the same title from other publishers, but containing totally different texts (700, 781, 815), and two imitations of the Wood text (705, 774).

Besides the editions of the *Young Child's A,B,C*, special attention has been given to *The New-England Primer, McGuffey Readers, The Appleton Readers* (which were the main competition for the McGuffey-readers after 1879), *The Cyr Readers* (issued by Ginn & Co. in the late 1890s), and the *Dick and Jane Readers* and their predecessors from Scott, Foresman & Co. Each of these was exemplary for reading instruction at one time or another in this country's history. Other topics for which multiple examples have been included are (1) German language ABCs and readers, particularly from Pennsylvania, (2) readers and spellers in Native American languages, (3) other non-English readers and spellers, some with parallel English texts (e.g., 66, 763, 837) and one in three languages (614), (4) Confederate primers, readers, and spellers, and (5) primers and readers in simplified orthographies, including nearly all of the extant im-
prints in Edwin Leigh's pronouncing orthography.

A simplified bibliographic style has been adopted for the bibliography. Author names, when known, are given in the form shown in the National Union Catalogue. Imprint information is taken from the title page, but variations of interest from the cover are noted. Date of publication, when not overtly indicated, is replaced by a copyright date, enclosed in square brackets (e.g., [1843]), if available. When neither of these is indicated in the text, probable dates of printing determined by the libraries or archives from which the materials were obtained are used, if available. As a last resort, an attempt has been made to determine when the publisher existed and to include these dates, also in square brackets (e.g., [1833-1838]). To facilitate access to the collection, a separate chronological index has been included, along with a combined author, illustrator and publisher index.

Summary

There is much more that can be said about primers, spellers and the like and about the particular materials included in this collection. The transition from the anonymous spellers and primers of the 17th and 18th centuries through the single author readers of the early 19th century to the multiple, corporate authors of the present day raises many questions about who owns the American reading script and what authorship means for a reading series. With custom book publishing and with hypermedia, even the terms book and edition may need redefining. The role of printing technology and publishing organization on reader types and reader design remains to be fully explored, especially for the 20th century. We appear to know more about the manner in which the Webster spellers and the McGuffey readers were revised than we do about the Dick and Jane readers or any other modern reading series. And finally, we need to attend quickly to the need to collect, catalogue, and preserve the textbooks not only of the past but also of the present. Cataloguing standards for textbooks need to be sharpened, editions for major series need to be identified, and collections catalogued into the nationally available on-line systems; i.e., RLIN and OCLC. Repositories, preferably in major research libraries, are needed for current textbooks, along with cooperative agreements with publishers to ensure that major editions are identified and preserved. Primers, spellers, readers, and the like are part of our national heritage, a segment of that common set of experiences shared by every person who learns to read in America.
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<td></td>
<td>Improved, or, an easy and pleasant guide to The Art of Reading: to which is added, The Assembly's Shorter Catechism.</td>
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<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<td>019</td>
<td>The Columbian Primer [No. 1]; or Child's First Lessons; Being an arrangement of letters and words, made easy for the improvement of young children.</td>
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<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<td>020</td>
<td>The Mount Vernon Reader. A course of reading lessons, selected with reference to their moral influence on the hearts and lives of the young. Designed for junior classes.</td>
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In these books the author has carried forth his plan of facile instruction more completely than is done in any similar book in our language which has come to our knowledge.

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<td>029</td>
<td>Easy Lessons in Reading For the younger classes in common schools.</td>
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To acquire the spelling and reading of their own, as well as to get acquainted with the English tongue; which for that purpose is put on the opposite page. Waerighwaghswawe Iksaongoenwa. Tsiwaondad-derighhonny Kaghyadcfghera; Nayondeweyestaghk aycweanaghnodon ayeghyadow Knienkehaga Kaweandaghkough; Dyorheas-hagaoni tsinhiadiweanotea.

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