1993

Agent of Change or Trusted Servant: The Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg Press

Susan Stromei Berg
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the American Studies Commons, Mass Communication Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-3dc6-hm97

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
AGENT OF CHANGE OR TRUSTED SERVANT:
THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WILLIAMSBURG PRESS

A Thesis
Presented To
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Susan Stromei Berg
1993
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

[Signatures of Author and Committee Members]

Approved, May 1993

[Signatures of Author and Committee Members]
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. GENTLEMAN'S LIBRARY TO LITERARY EMPORIUM: PRINT CULTURE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. BOOK SALES AT THE WILLIAMSBURG PRINTING OFFICE</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. WILLIAMSBURG PRINTERS AND THEIR WORLD</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It may seem presumptuous that a work this modest should have so many debts, but that is the case. Cary Carson began this process by encouraging me to enter the American Studies program. Former Library Director Pearce Grove and my colleagues, Liz Ackert, Lois Danuser, Mary Haskell, and Mary Keeling provided support in ways too numerous to count. John Ingram graciously shared his work on Williamsburg bindings with me and granted special research privileges.

Several historians offered advice and helpful suggestions. Gregory and Cynthia Stiverson's detailed work on the printing office served as a starting point for this thesis. Harold Gill alerted me to the importance of schoolbooks in book sales and answered several specific questions on Virginia history. John M. Hemphill II was invaluable, editing early versions of the thesis and suggesting new sources. His interest and encouragement helped sustain me during the long process. Gail S. Terry provided excellent advice on structure and format, as well as much needed moral support during the times when it seemed that this project was taking much longer than it should. Both Thad Tate and James Whittenburg offered useful suggestions to enrich the work. My greatest intellectual debt, however, is to Robert Gross who served as my best critic, helping to shape my argument and offering suggestions on how to enhance it. The standard he sets challenges his students to do their best.

A personal debt is owed to a few special people. Rachel Marks spent weeks identifying people in the Virginia Gazette Index and the Virginia Historical Index. She also used her professional editorial eye to review this manuscript in its many editions. Inge Flester took handwritten charts and turned them into elegant tables. Her skill in creating the tables and in assisting with the final mechanical editing on Wordperfect was invaluable. Sven Berg changed his lifestyle to accommodate his wife's schedule. Without his support this paper would not have been possible.
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Geographic Distribution of Printing Office Customers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Williamsburg Printing Office Customer Identification</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Types of Books Sold at Williamsburg Printing Office</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Williamsburg Printing Office School Book Purchases</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Over the past fifty years, scholars have almost exclusively shaped their discussion of colonial Virginia's print culture upon studies of private libraries. What has not been so carefully examined are recorded book sales at the Williamsburg printing office in the mid-eighteenth century. By studying these transactions, it is possible to determine who were the customers, what types of books they were buying, what was the geographic area of the market, and how the purchases were made. This information provides insight into another dimension of print culture in the colony and reveals the printer's role in creating a literary marketplace that stretched throughout Virginia and included customers from the middling class.

As the capital of Virginia, Williamsburg was the seat of government and its center of cultural and economic activity. It was also the site of the College of William and Mary. The Williamsburg printing office operated a large book store, produced the colony's newspaper, and managed a post office, thus creating an information network for the colonists. The print culture of colonial Virginia cannot be considered complete without investigating the sales and operations of the printing office.

A study of sales for 1750-1752 and 1764-1766 reveals that colonists from all over Virginia were buying books. From 1752 to 1766 the number of customers increased at a rate greater than the population. Most of the customers were from the gentry; however, craftsmen, merchants, and tavernkeepers—members of the middling class—made up a sizeable portion of the market. Although the *Virginia Almanack* was a perennial best seller, readers' tastes changed over the sixteen-year period from religious works to politics and novels. Sales of schoolbooks increased reflecting an interest in didactic literature. Customers purchased books in a variety of ways, in person, by mail, or through a friend.

The printer's role in this process was a complicated one. Invited to Williamsburg to serve as public printer, William Parks and his successors expanded and diversified their operations to insure economic success. The information network they created was a byproduct of their economic ventures. By offering books for sale, they expanded print culture to the middling class. Through the schoolbooks they sold, they provided a means for ambitious Virginians to improve themselves. In agreeing to print works written by Virginians whose ideas ran counter to political or religious orthodoxy, Williamsburg's printers circulated new ideas and supplied a forum for public debate.
AGENT OF CHANGE OR TRUSTED SERVANT:

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WILLIAMSBURG PRESS
CHAPTER I

GENTLEMAN'S LIBRARY TO LITERARY EMPORIUM:
PRINT CULTURE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

In July 1771, Robert Skipwith, a young gentleman planter who was brother-in-law to the future Mrs. Jefferson, wrote to Thomas Jefferson reminding him of his offer to identify some books that Skipwith could purchase to form a private library. Skipwith saw the necessity of acquiring a private library, but was not inclined to put much effort or expense into the process. He wanted his books to be attractively bound according to the most current fashion, but at the same time set a spending limit for Jefferson:

"Let them amount to five and twenty pounds sterling, or, if you think proper, to thirty pounds. . ."!

Jefferson's response, the famous Skipwith list, is an example of what books this intellectual leader of the eighteenth century considered to be important for personal learning. Despite the guidelines, Jefferson was unable to keep within the figure that Skipwith had budgeted. He prefaced his list with an explanation:

"I sat down with a design of executing your request to form a catalogue to books amounting to about 30. lib. sterl. but could by no means satisfy myself with any partial choice I could make."2
Less than three years later, Philip Fithian, tutor to the children of Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, spent the better part of a June morning cataloging the books in his employer's library. Fithian counted six hundred forty-one titles and one thousand fifty-two volumes, an impressive number; but when he reported his activity to his employer, he discovered that Carter had a second library of half the size at his Williamsburg home. These two incidents, occurring a few years apart in separate areas of the colony, testify to the importance of books and learning to established Virginia gentlemen such as Carter and to those seeking admittance to that influential class, such as Robert Skipwith. Other Virginia gentlemen of Carter's economic and social standing also developed magnificent libraries. William Fitzhugh, William Byrd, John Mercer, Thomas Jefferson, and St. George Tucker are some of the better known Virginians who amassed sizable collections of books that they valued highly.

Virginia gentlemen, who had a long tradition in their regard for the printed word, embraced books and learning as a token of their rank. As Louis B. Wright points out, "the pattern of life which the ruling class of Virginia planters sought to follow was an ancient heritage" derived from the Renaissance concept of the gentleman. This identification sprang from the Renaissance ideal of the gentleman, originating in sixteenth-century Italy and passed on to
seventeenth-century England. Inherent in the ideal was an assumption of a natural inequality within the human race. Men were divided into two basic groups, those whose natural and inherited right was to rule, and those whose station and lack of breeding relegated them to the laboring classes. Levels of education, standards of behavior, and rules of conduct were strictly prescribed for the two groups.

Books and learning reinforced this social and cultural division in two ways. First, the gentry needed learning, and therefore books, in order to rule wisely. In addition to practical works, gentlemen collected and read volumes of histories, philosophies, natural science, and the classics.6 For them, reading was frequently a leisure activity that also accomplished an important social purpose. Second, these large libraries, filled with leather and gilt bound folios, became physical symbols of the authority by which the gentry made decisions that shaped society and influenced the common sort.7 In contrast, members of the middling and lower classes owned considerably fewer books and used them in a much narrower way--either to develop pious behavior and seek eternal salvation through devotional literature or to learn such useful skills as reading, writing, accounting procedures, or craft techniques from handy manuals.8 The books that their social betters read were frequently too expensive for the common folk; they also did not serve a practical purpose.
From the start, the first settlers in Virginia affirmed their commitment to genteel standards of culture and to the role that books played in keeping society's values intact. In 1619, amidst starvation, Indian Wars, and general turmoil John Pory, the first speaker of the House of Burgesses, decried the lack of culture he had observed among the early adventurers in the small colony and vowed in a letter to an English lord "to have some good book alwayes in store. . . ." Though he had crossed an ocean and moved over three thousand miles, he was eager to keep up with events back home. He requested the lord send him "what pamphletts and relations of the Interim since I was with you. . . ."9

Pory was not an exception to the norm. Many of Virginia's earliest settlers were members of the gentry looking for commercial success in the New World while importing the culture of the old. The colony's treasurer, George Sandys, found time away from his duties to translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*10

This auspicious beginning did not survive the collapse of the Virginia Company in 1624. James I made Virginia England's first royal colony, and for the next fifty years, Virginians concentrated on profiting from the tobacco trade with England and acquiring more land. As the population grew, more colonies were established, and county governments
were formed. Economic and political opportunity overrode cultural pursuits.

By the end of the seventeenth century, a landed gentry class had emerged that controlled Virginia's highest body of government, the General Assembly. The gentry once more began to enrich their lives with material goods and cultural interests from the mother country. Wealthy planters built large estates and imported English manufactured goods, including luxury items such as fine china, fabrics, silver, furniture, and books. Several gentlemen amassed large libraries to buttress the English legal, material, and cultural values they wished to transplant to Virginia. What they did not own, they borrowed from their peers. In a hasty letter to his friend Ralph Wormeley, William Fitzhugh, the seventeenth-century planter and lawyer, requested the loan of some legal books. Fitzhugh lamented the lack of English culture in Virginia and sought solace in his books. In 1687 he sent a barren description of Virginia to a friend in England:

"Society that is good & ingenious is very scarce, and seldom to be come at except in books. Good Education of children is almost impossible, & better never be born than ill bred."

Books were important to Virginia gentlemen for several reasons. First, they were the written record of English cultural and intellectual values that the colony's leaders were trying to transplant. Second, they were the chief local source of education for the gentry and their children.
Although some planters sent their children to English schools, many did not, and in those families private libraries supplied the materials from which their children were taught. In addition, those Virginians returning from abroad created their own libraries to continue their English education.¹²

What did these gentlemen collect for their private libraries? Both Fithian's catalog and Jefferson's list contain a number of different subjects: history, classical works, religious works, law, politics, science, reference books, that is, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and belles lettres. Jefferson, in particular, included several belles lettres titles, explaining that "the entertainments of fiction are useful as well as pleasant."¹³

Robert Carter's library was heavily weighted with classical authors. It included more practical works and music books than Jefferson listed, probably to assist him with plantation management and to feed his passion for music, as well as more grammars, presumably to be used by his children. Taken together, these catalogs are representative of a typical Virginia gentleman's private library. Such libraries with their broad range of subjects bear a closer resemblance to English libraries of the time than to their New England counterparts whose Puritan theocracy encouraged the collecting and studying of religious works.¹⁴ They also attest to the English belief
that a gentleman's education should be extensive but not deep in any one subject.15

The use of private libraries to educate was so important to John Carter, a Northern Neck contemporary of William Fitzhugh, he made a special reference to it in his will in 1722. Carter left all his books to his elder son John and requested that his younger son Robert, who was to become "King" Carter,

"be well educated for the use of his estate, and he is to have a man or youth servant for him, that hath been brought up in the Latin school, . . . to teach him his books, either in English or Latin, . . . (for it is my will that he shall learn both Latin and English, and to write). . . ."16 [Parentheses in original.]

This description of a colonial literary culture dominated by the private libraries of Virginia gentlemen who were dependent on imported reading matter has been well documented by modern bibliographers and historians.17 The great eighteenth-century libraries of William Byrd II and III, Thomas Jefferson, and Robert Carter have been written about by several scholars. They represent but the tip of the iceberg. Louis B. Wright's influential book The First Gentlemen of Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class reported on the libraries and intellectual interests of members of Virginia's seventeenth-century gentry: William Fitzhugh, Ralph Wormeley II, Richard Lee II, the Carter family, and Robert Beverley II. Wright's book first appeared in 1940; yet even by then,
journals such as The William & Mary Quarterly and The Virginia Magazine of History had been publishing lists of colonial Virginia libraries for fifty years. This plentitude of evidence found its way into research and scholarly writing. Student after student discovered that, with an abundance of surviving records, early Virginia libraries could be a fruitful topic for a thesis or dissertation. In 1978 Richard Beale Davis, a historian who had written extensively on private libraries in the colonial South, published Intellectual Life in the Colonial South: 1585-1763, a three-volume work that analyzed primary source material on Virginia. From his exhaustive research in libraries, historical societies, and manuscript repositories on both sides of the Atlantic, Davis confirmed the significant amount of documentation that exists for colonial private libraries. He wrote of hundreds of personal collections with long lists of books, many with several hundred volumes. This type of evidence—private libraries—has encouraged researchers to focus attention on them and analyze their contents and significance. In contrast, cursory references to "a parcel of old books," a commonly found phrase in inventories of the middling sort, do not invite such investigations. In study after study, the source has dictated the conclusion: researchers have fashioned their concept of Virginia literary culture based on the evidence that they examined, private libraries of the
gentry. Indeed, this theme of gentry domination has been so pervasive that even the best-known study of the printing office, Gregory and Cynthia Stiverson's "The Colonial Retail Book Trade: Availability and Affordability of Reading Material in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Virginia," published in Printing and Society in Early America, and their expanded report "Books Both Useful and Entertaining: A Study of Book Purchases and Reading Habits of Virginians in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," perpetuates that argument.18

One possible reason why this portrait of a gentlemanly culture has persisted and influenced historians and scholars is the lack of a good literacy study for the colony. There have been extensive literacy studies for New England; however, the major study for Virginia, published in a larger work on New England by Kenneth Lockridge, has not been totally accepted by Virginia scholars. A small study of York County records, conducted in the 1970s, points to a wider rate of literacy than Lockridge claims existed.19 In addition, within the last decade scholars have begun to question the validity of literacy studies based on the presumption that those who could not write also could not read.20 Finally, the lack of public schools in colonial Virginia, in contrast to her sister colony to the North, Massachusetts, has led many researchers to assume that only the wealthy could afford to read.
Another reason is that gentlemen's libraries with their reliance on imported books reflected the political and economic realities of the seventeenth-century colony. In accordance with the Licensing Act in effect in England until 1693, the royal government in Virginia was determined to control the distribution of information within its borders. No printer would be allowed to pose a potential challenge. In 1670 Governor Berkeley denounced printing stating:

"I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, . . . . God keep us from both!"²¹

Berkeley's successors took him at his word. In 1682, when an innocent William Nuthead, recruited by an enterprising planter, arrived in Jamestown with a press, public officials immediately shut him down, fined his sponsor, and sent him packing for Maryland.²² A few months later, Virginia's new governor, Lord Howard of Effingham, arrived carrying a royal order that "no person be permitted to uses any press for printing upon any occasion whatsoever."²³ Thus, Berkeley and his successors were able to prevent printers from setting up shop in Virginia.

Almost fifty years later, in 1730, the General Assembly reversed its position. It invited William Parks, a Maryland printer, to come to Virginia and print the laws and journals of the House of Burgesses. Parks, who already had a
thriving business in Annapolis, saw new opportunities in Virginia and opened a shop in Williamsburg.

Surely Parks's arrival in Williamsburg, by request of the General Assembly, must have been very different from the arrival of another aspiring printer, Benjamin Franklin, in Philadelphia seven years earlier. Franklin gives a vivid description of his first day in Philadelphia, hungry, practically out of money, and looking for work:

"I was in my working Dress, . . . . I was dirty from my Journey; my Pockets were stuff'd out with Shirts and Stockings; I knew no Soul, nor where to look for Lodging. I was fatigu'd . . . very hungry, and my whole Stock of Cash consisted of a Dutch Dollar and about a Shilling in Copper. 24

Franklin, a runaway apprentice, had no prospect of a job on his arrival and was in fact turned away from the first shop to which he applied. Nor was Franklin's situation very different from that of other colonial printers. The average print shop was small with only one operating press. In order to make a living, printers soon realized they needed to develop business strategies that would ensure their survival. Being named public printer was a much sought after appointment that guaranteed a substantial annual salary—usually several hundred pounds—and provided a financial base for other business ventures. Printing a newspaper was also a common practice to increase income. Collecting subscriptions and fees for advertisements from readers was not a sure thing, however, as evidenced by
frequent pleas in colonial papers requesting readers to settle their accounts. Nevertheless, this did not discourage the production of newspapers, and for the period 1700-1765 three quarters of all colonial printers published a newspaper at one time.25

Printers found that offering a variety of wares could be profitable. Their shops often resembled general emporiums where customers found that, in addition to stationery and sealing wax, they could purchase coffee, clothing, medicine, and spectacles.26 A newly trained journeyman embarking on his career found, like Franklin, that it was usually best for him to leave the town in which he had been trained in order to set up a shop, since it was often questionable whether the location could support two printing offices. The successful printer was one who aggressively sought out financial opportunities through geographic flexibility and diversified operations.27

In that sense, William Parks could be considered a model for other printers. He had managed a printing shop both in England and in Annapolis, and he came to Williamsburg with the assurance of at least one job, that of printing the laws for the government. Parks very quickly turned this opportunity into a prosperous business for himself. Very shortly he printed several small pieces besides starting work on the laws of the colony. His early imprints show that he was sensitive to the fact that his
economic success would, to a large degree, be determined by his ability to retain his appointment as public printer. The implication of this was that Parks, like other colonial printers, found himself in the precarious position of ostensibly operating a free press while, at the same time, practicing his skills so as to curry favor with the government. Two of his earliest works were A Charge to the Grand Jury, a printed version of an address that had been written and delivered by Governor Sir William Gooch to the General Court, and Typographia. An Ode, on Printing. Insrib'd to the Honourable William Gooch, Esq; His Majesty's Lieutenant-Governor, and Commander in Chief of the Colony of Virginia.28 Parks's implicit message in printing these two works was that he was a faithful servant of the governor and General Assembly and worthy of their business and trust.

Parks was shrewd in printing these pieces so soon after his arrival. He showed an awareness of his new position and a respect for his employer. Other printers were not so savvy. In his seminal essay on the business strategies of colonial printers, Stephen Botein has pointed out numerous instances of other printers who did not fare so well in public service. He concluded that "often it was difficult [for printers] to navigate through the fluctuating multi-factional disputes that were the stuff of colonial American politics . . . ."29
For a few years Parks continued to operate both his shops, in Maryland and Virginia; however, soon he devoted all his energies to the Williamsburg operation. He began to diversify his business and built a solid economic base for himself. Parks expanded the print shop operations and enlarged its customers by printing almanacs and short pamphlets that supplied Virginians with practical information. In 1736 he began another venture that also increased his market for readers. He established the Virginia Gazette, a newspaper for the colony. Parks had printed a newspaper in England and had established the Maryland Gazette, the first newspaper south of Pennsylvania, in Annapolis in 1726. With the almanacs and the Virginia Gazette he created a permanent niche for himself with customers outside the General Assembly. Readers could now get news of Virginia, of other colonies, of London, and even of such remote and exotic places as Constantinople, all for the subscription price of twelve shillings a year. Those colonists who might not afford a subscription to the Gazette could, for only 7 1/2 pence, purchase an almanac containing information on when to plant and harvest crops, dates of local fairs, lists of burgesses, and distances between cities in the colonies.

Parks also expanded his product line and his market by selling printed blank forms, forms for indentures, patents, warrants, tobacco notes. These paper forms facilitated the
legal and business transactions upon which the colony's economy was based. In 1738 he established a postal service within Virginia and connected its operations with activities at the printing office. His customers could now send and receive mail at the printing office while they were purchasing their almanac, Gazette, pamphlets, or printed forms. The post office also benefitted Parks by enabling him to expand his market geographically and receive orders from other areas of the colony. A few years later, he began what was to become for his successors the most profitable venture of his operation, a bookstore for the colony.

Taking advantage of the proximity of the printing office to the College of William and Mary, Parks proposed an arrangement by which he could import and sell books to college students. His request met with favor at a meeting of the President and Masters:

Mr. Wm Parks intending to open a bookseller's shop in this Town and having proposed to furnish the students of this College with such books at a reasonable price as the Masters shall direct him to send for and likewise to take all the school books in the College and pay him 35p. cent on the sterling cost to make it currency, his proposals are unanimously agreed to.

Soon he was selling books to other colonists as well and making use of the Virginia Gazette to advertise his books and of the postal service to permit mail order sales and delivery. Sometime in the 1740s Parks extended his business further by building and operating his own paper mill outside of Williamsburg. This was one of the few paper mills in the
colonies. Although not much is known about its operations, Parks was able to print a sufficient quantity to use his own paper in some of his imprints.33

Finally, Parks was more than just a businessman opening new sources of income. Even as he expanded operations, he continued to practice his craft as a printer and sold a number of monographs and pamphlets to the colonists. Parks's offerings were varied in content. Among them he printed William Stith's *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia*, the first history of Virginia; E. Smith's *The Compleat Housewife*, the first cookbook in America; and reprinted the English best seller, Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man*.34 As a craftsman Parks offered a variety of titles to the colonists, and as an entrepreneur he created a successful and widely diversified business.

William Parks died at sea in 1750 on a return trip to England. In the twenty years since he had first come to Williamsburg, he had developed a printing office that did not cater just to members of the General Assembly. Parks's operations served the private citizens as much as it did government officials. He had expanded the communications network for Virginians to include other colonies and remote parts of the world. With his printed forms and stationery supplies, he supplied the documents that facilitated business and legal transactions and allowed the colony's
business to support and encourage population growth and develop the economy. By introducing a bookstore to the colony, Parks created a long-lasting tie between his business and the College and also made the printing office the main source of books for Virginians within the colony. Although Virginia was one hundred years behind Massachusetts in establishing its press, within twenty years of operations, it rivaled other colonial print shops in the extent and breadth of its operations. By 1750, Parks's press had become a local literary emporium and communications center serving Virginians in many more ways than the burgesses and councilmen who had invited him to come had ever envisioned.

The story of William Parks and his Virginia business venture has underlying significance. Prior to his arrival access to information in Virginia had been closely bound up in the hands of the elite, the wealthy gentry who held political office and accumulated large private libraries. The establishment and later expansion of the Virginia press—specifically creating access to almanacs, newspapers, pamphlets, manuals, and cheap didactic literature—put information directly into the hands of the middle class who, for the first time, received it without the selective filter of the elite. Thus, the local press helped break the grip the gentry had on information coming into the colony.35
In expanding his operations and selling printed works to a larger audience Parks also created for himself and his successors a complicated situation and at times, a precarious role. Having been called to Virginia to print the public laws and having accepted appointment as public printer, Parks did not wish to antagonize the General Assembly and jeopardize his position by printing opposing views. Yet he undermined the very role he had assumed by expanding his printing office to produce newspapers and print and sell books. By diversifying his operations, he permitted more views to be printed and circulated. Information was no longer disseminated by the gentry, but was available to whoever could purchase it; and in the case of an almanac, the cost was only 7 1/2 pence. With the availability of the almanacs and Virginia Gazette, ordinary people were empowered to think and act for themselves and not depend on the advice of their betters.

This new interpretation of Virginia print culture must be tested, however, before it can be substantiated. Fortunately, there is a means of determining what Virginians were reading. Two accounting books kept by William Hunter and Joseph Royle document credit sales in the printing office for the periods July 1750-June 1752 and January 1764-January 1766 respectively.36

By examining these sales, it is possible to see who was purchasing books, the types and quantities purchased, and
the extent of the market. Unlike lists of libraries, these records have seldom been used. One possible reason for this is that the accounts of the printing office reflected the conduct of business. Literary historians have perhaps unconsciously directed their studies to evidence from private libraries based on the assumption that reading is a function of leisure time. Virginia, for all its posturing, however, had been from the very beginning a commercial society devoted to production and trade. It is time to examine how print culture came to serve these utilitarian ends.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


4. Actually, Robert Skipwith's pedigree probably secured him a place among the gentry. His father was Sir William Skipwith of Prestwould. As the third son, Robert did not inherit the title which went to his older brother Peyton. The Skipwith connection with fine libraries continued when Sir Peyton SKIPWITH married Jean Miller in 1788. Lady Jean Skipwith's library, consisting of over 850 volumes has been described as "incomparably the largest and best made by a woman in Virginia." See Mildred K. Abraham, "The Library of Lady Jean Skipwith: A Book Collection from the Age of Jefferson," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 91 (July 1983): 296-347, quotation on p. 296.


8. Elizabeth Cometti's study of book sales by a Piedmont North Carolina merchant firm in the 1770s shows customers firmly rejecting secular literature that was popular in London in favor of religious works, hornbooks, and spellers. Unfortunately, since her evidence is limited to merchant's inventories, she is unable to identify customers. See Elizabeth Cometti, "Some Early Best


27.Ibid., pp. 145 and 152.
28. Parks's earliest works from the Williamsburg press are Sir William Gooch's *A Charge to the Grand Jury. At a General Court, Held at the Capitol of the City of Williamsburg, in Virginia, on Monday the 19th Day of October 1730.* (1730), and John Markland's *Typographia...* (1730).


32. "Journals of the Meetings of the President and Masters of William and Mary College," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 1st series, 2(July 1893):51.


CHAPTER II
BOOK SALES AT THE WILLIAMSBURG PRINTING OFFICE

Just like typical eighteenth-century businessmen, William Hunter and Joseph Royle kept careful accounts of their trade. With the help of their apprentices and clerks, they recorded each sale in a wastebook which they later carefully transferred to a larger folio or daily journal, creating a more permanent record. At the same time, they posted charges against their customers' accounts in a separate ledger. This method of double entry accounting, which had been invented in sixteenth-century Italy, was the standard practice in England and the colonies.¹

As masters of the printing office, probably neither Hunter nor Royle would have been responsible for recording each transaction in the wastebook. More than likely a clerk or apprentice would perform that task. Reviewing the accounts, however, was a job usually reserved for the master, who could determine from the journals what his customers were buying, which of his accounts were doing well, and who was behind with payments. William Hunter in particular seemed to enjoy this aspect of management. Following each month's summary in his journal, he would note
that he had reviewed the figures and would occasionally draw a smiling face underneath his initials.\(^2\) For Hunter and Royle these business records served as a detailed instrument from which they could assess the financial health of their operations. Unfortunately, the complete business records for the years in which they managed the printing office no longer exist. The two books that have survived, daybooks or journals kept by William Hunter for the period 1750-1752 and by Joseph Royle for the period 1764-1766, contain records of individual credit transactions for those years as well as a summary of cash sales for 1750-1752. The daybooks shed light not only on the business practices of these two craftsmen but also on the reading habits of Virginians. From the book sales recorded in the daybooks and from other primary and secondary sources it is possible to determine for each period the geographic extent of the market, a demographic profile of the customers, the types of books sold, and, for the years 1764-1766, the nature of the actual purchase, that is, whether it was made in person by the buyer or indirectly through an agent or letter. The picture of a print culture that follows is based on an analysis of these records.

First of all, the printing office served a wide network throughout the colony. It provided books not only for the inhabitants of Williamsburg and the Tidewater area, but also for pioneering settlers on the frontier. Merchants in other
parts of Virginia also sold books, but their markets were limited to ten or twelve miles from their stores. The area of customers for William Hunter and Joseph Royle stretched from Norfolk to the Virginia frontier and into Maryland, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Although a majority of their customers were from the Tidewater area, over 25 percent lived in Virginia's Piedmont or beyond. (see Table I.) In summary, the Williamsburg bookstore served as the Emporium for the West.

Second, the printing office drew a broad array of inhabitants, not just gentlemen and scholars from the College of William and Mary, but also a host of ordinary men and women, both free and slave who came to purchase goods or to deliver a message from their master respectively. The bookstore functioned as a social center whose customers had a remarkably stable profile. Joseph Royle carefully noted how each purchase was made, whether in person, either by the purchaser or an agent, or indirectly by letter, order, or note. In doing so he provided modern scholars with a glimpse of the social experience connected with the printing office. (See Table II.)

This broad spectrum of customers can be seen even more vividly by examining a typical business day at the printing office. For example, by studying Thomas Jefferson's trips to the printing office it is easy to see what it would have been like to shop there. Jefferson visited Royle's
TABLE I

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PRINTING OFFICE CUSTOMERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>1750-52</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>1764-66</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamsburg, James City County, York County</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidewater Area up to the Fall line</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenandoah Valley and Blue Ridge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outside Virginia</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>252*</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>386*</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Does not include postriders (1750-52 = 4; 1764-66 = 2) and unidentified customers (1764-66 = 7).

TABLE II

METHOD OF PURCHASE OF BOOKS
WILLIAMSBURG PRINTING OFFICE, 1764-1766

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of Transactions</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct purchase by individual*</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect purchase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written, i.e. letter, note, order, post</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Recorded</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes men and women customers.

(Source for all tables: "Virginia Gazette Daybooks, 1750-52, 1764-66;" identification from Virginia Gazette, Virginia Historical Index, York County Records.)
establishment thirty times between January 1764 and 1766. During his visits he was not only buying books, but purchasing stationery, picking up letters, and settling his account. Entering the shop he would have encountered customers from Williamsburg or other locations who were conducting similar business and who represented a cross section of society. On a typical day Jefferson would have literally rubbed elbows with Richard Bland, burgess from Prince George County, Robert Carter Nicholas, treasurer for the colony, and Speaker of the House John Robinson. He would have greeted merchants such as James Tarpley from Williamsburg and Alexander Cunninghame from King George County, and conversed with Mrs. Priscilla Dawson, widow of Thomas Dawson, president of the College of William and Mary. He could easily have waited with craftsman Edward Charlton and wigmaker Robert Lyon for the arrival of the postrider with the mail, and quite possibly stepped aside to let Ann Wetherburn, co-owner of Wetherburn's tavern across the street buy a book for her son. The young law student saw several professors and students from William and Mary at the west end of Duke of Gloucester Street purchasing schoolbooks. During his numerous visits he witnessed craftsmen buying assorted titles, merchants purchasing almanacs by the gross, and slaves picking up books and writing supplies for their masters. Virginians from all
walks of life had reason to visit Mr. Hunter's or Mr. Royle's establishment.

An analysis of book sales shows that a quarter of the customers were members of the gentry. (See Table III.) Another fifth were merchants, doctors, and lawyers. Students and professors from William and Mary and members of the clergy represented another 6 to 8 percent. As the Stiversons and others have already noted, the booksellers met the needs of the upper orders. What is more interesting is that a sizeable portion--approximately 17 percent--of their clientele were from lower ranks: small planters, craftsmen, tavernkeepers, and others. Indeed, hidden within the sales to merchants, who purchased books wholesale, are additional customers who, for the most part, probably belonged to these lower ranks.

With one-fifth the customers being members of the House of Burgesses or General Council, it is natural to expect some seasonality in book sales with a marked increase when the General Assembly was in session. However, this is not always borne out in what Hunter and Royle recorded for these periods. Analyzing seasonality is further complicated by the fact that occasionally Hunter and Royle would delay posting a transaction that had occurred a few months ago so that the actual date of sale is not known.

The twelve years that separate the two account books witnessed a significant change in the number of customers.
## WILLIAMSBURG PRINTING OFFICE
### CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customers</th>
<th>1750–52</th>
<th></th>
<th>1764–66</th>
<th></th>
<th>Net Percent</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentry</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgesses/Council</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justices</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Planters</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavernkeepers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftspeople</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William &amp; Mary</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>+0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postriders</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Virginia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>-4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>256</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>395</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From 1752 to 1755 the number grew from 256 to 395, an increase of 54 percent in a decade and a half. Compared to the population growth of 16 percent in Williamsburg and the Tidewater area over the same period, the increase is truly significant. Virginia's audience for books was growing at a much faster rate than the local population.

Book purchases expanded too, but at a lower rate. According to the account books, the sale of almanacs rose by 51 percent and of all other books by 36 percent for the period 1764-66. Altogether, the average customer bought 4 or 5 books.

For both William Hunter and Joseph Royle, the runaway best seller was the Virginia Almanack. (See Table IV.) Seven out of every ten books sold was an almanac. Printed locally, with astronomical calculations supplied by a Pennsylvania philomath, Hunter and later Royle followed the example of other colonial printers and added useful information of importance to Virginians. Purchasers could learn of upcoming events, such as Public Times, when colonists from all over Virginia would gather twice a year in Williamsburg to participate in the social and commercial activities surrounding the meeting of the General Court. County fair days and the names of the members of the House of Burgesses were also listed frequently.

More than any other item sold, the almanac was essentially everyman's book. Everybody had to have one; for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Books Sold at Williamsburg Printing Office</th>
<th>1764-1766</th>
<th>1765-1766</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sales</strong></td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Works</strong></td>
<td>619</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medicine</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moral</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary Journals</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laws</strong></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encyclopedias</strong></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dictionary Literature</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classics</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>belles Lettres</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Almanacs</strong></td>
<td>174</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages are approximate and rounded.
every new customer, another almanac was sold. Sales of almanacs rose as fast as the clientele. For one reason the price was right. Plain and unadorned, it was affordable to virtually any white adult. Hunter and Royle also sold fancy, personalized versions with blank interleaving or even leather binding. Any planter was a potential customer for an almanac. More often than not, the printers sold multiple copies—some fancy, some plain—to planters who while shopping at the printing office, bought extras to take back to their neighbors. Both Hunter and Royle regularly sold new editions by the gross to out-of-town merchants, such as John and James Scott from Nansemond County, who then marketed them in their stores. These simple but useful books constituted the staple of the bookseller's trade—the literary equivalent of tobacco. Altogether, they comprised over 2/3 of all works sold.

For William Hunter religious works were the second most popular category. He stocked and sold an assortment of titles including different editions of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, various sermons, psalters, hymnbooks, and other devotional fare. One remarkable feature of such sales is the fact that the most popular religious titles were all local imprints. Hunter's printing of a sermon, The Pernicious Nature of Gaming, delivered by the Reverend William Stith before the General Assembly, sold nearly two hundred copies. The popularity of this title may have
been caused by the fact that the 1752 General Assembly was considering a proposed amendment to the ban on gambling. Two other locally printed works, *Miscellaneous Poems* by Presbyterian minister Samuel Davies and a reprint edition of Thomas Sherlock's *The Bishop of London's Letter to the Clergy and People of London*, both sold well over one hundred copies and were more popular than perennial bestsellers such as the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.9 Stith's sermon, Davies's poems, and Sherlock's letter were all inexpensively priced, ranging from 7 1/2 pence for the letter to one or two shillings for the poems.

During Hunter's time Virginians were required to attend the services of the Church of England. Yet ironically, when it came time to choose what they would buy, they preferred to mix their religion with politics, as in the case of Stith's sermon on gaming; to read inspirational verses by Davies, a dissident minister; or to learn of a major earthquake that had struck London, as in Sherlock's letter. Straightforward theological works did not sell as well to Virginians.

As a businessman William Hunter was quick to perceive the popularity of these types of religious books. In this manner he was similar to Jeremy Condy, a contemporary Boston bookseller who published sermons by local ministers, including those with controversial beliefs such as the Arminian minister Jonathan Mayhew. Hunter and Condy also
shared another feature in their business practice. In Williamsburg William Hunter continued Parks's practice of selling books to the students of William and Mary, while in Boston Condy found a profitable trade in serving the students and alumni of Harvard College. In fact, over twenty-five percent of Condy's customers were Harvard students.  

Oddly enough, during this period, despite all the debates and deliberations of the Burgesses and Councilmen when the General Assembly met in the Royal Capital, William Hunter's bookstore sold hardly any political pamphlets. His public business rather rested on the sale of manuals and laws.

In 1750-52 the Williamsburg bookstore could have been in New England. It provided books to a college community. Its most popular pieces were from two main genres, almanacs and religious books. Virginia's bookstores dealt no more in straight politics and no less in religion at mid-century than did their counterparts in once-Puritan Massachusetts.

Within fifteen years, however, a dramatic transformation occurred. Although almanacs continued as the staple at the bookstore, the nature of sales for other books changed significantly from mid-century to the dawn of the Revolutionary era. Despite the expansion of customers and sales, the market for religious books collapsed. Sales fell over 74 percent from 619 to 166 copies. Whereas in 1750-52
religious books had constituted nearly half of all sales, excluding almanacs; by 1764-66 they represented less than 10 percent. In sharp contrast, politics dominated the attention of readers. The mere eight pamphlets of mid-century had swelled to 340. They accounted for nearly one out of five sales (19 percent) in the twenty-five-month period recorded in the daybook. Locally produced works such as Royle's printing of the Stamp Act, Richard Bland's The Colonel Dismounted, Landon Carter's The Rector Detected, and John Camm's A Review of the Rector Detected captured the interest of an informed populace. Three of the four most popular political pamphlets sold were on the subject of a local controversy, the Parson's Cause. Ironically, as religious books lost their popularity, Virginians' interest in religion now turned to the political clash between church and state. During this period Virginians found that their appetite for politics was fed by the printed works that spoke to current issues.

Politics alone did not drive this new market. The demand for belles lettres also contributed to its growth. Spurred on by imports, sales of novels more than doubled. The popularity of this genre was particularly agreeable to Joseph Royle, who, like his predecessor William Hunter, secured a greater profit on each sale of a novel than on any other item. However, unlike what Robert Winans has discovered in his study of late eighteenth-century book
sales, novels were not solely responsible for Royle's increased market. Virginians' demand for entertainment was matched by an eagerness for instruction.

Sales of manuals and schoolbooks were stunning. Purchases of educational works--grammars, spellers, and dictionaries--more than doubled; manuals nearly tripled. On the eve of the Revolution, both ordinary and elite Virginians were intent on both amusing and improving themselves.

With the exception of sales from almanacs, the 1765 Stamp Act, and the three Parson's Cause pamphlets, the bestsellers were schoolbooks. The most popular book was William Lily's *A Short Introduction to Grammar*, the standard English text for over two hundred years. It sold fifty-six copies. Second in sales was Mathurin Cordier's *A Select Century of Cordery's Colloquies*. Edited by John Clarke, it provided the young reader with an English translation of Latin texts. Another work by Clarke, *An Introduction to the Making of Latin*, placed a close third, with forty-two copies sold during the twenty-five month period. In didactic literature and classical works, English, Latin, and Greek grammars, classical authors for young readers, English and Latin dictionaries, and spelling books made up the principal sales. Other types of frequently purchased titles were George Fisher's *Arithmetick in the Plainest and Most Concise Method*, Samuel Richardson's *The Paths of Virtue Delineated*,...
and Charles Allen's *The Polite Lady; or, A Course of Female Education.*

These books represented two types of learning. The first was a mastery of practicalities such as the English language and the mathematical skills necessary for any enterprising young Virginian who desired to acquire the rudiments of learning as preparation for adulthood and a possible career. The second type provided an introduction to the classics and to the requirements of polite society. The sons and daughters of the gentry needed such an exposure if they were to assume their parents' roles as leaders in Virginia society. It seems that all social classes were interested in the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, while the Virginia gentry strove to insure that their children were given a classical education that set them apart from other social classes.

Most of the customers for these works, therefore were members of the Virginia gentry, who made over 47 percent of the purchases. However, members of other social classes--specifically, merchants, craftsmen, and tavernkeepers--also bought schoolbooks. Merchants alone made up over 17 percent of all purchases. Craftspeople and tavernkeepers totaled over 8 percent. (See Table V.)

The artisans who purchased schoolbooks represented a variety of trades: tailor, saddler, wigmaker, cabinetmaker, watchmaker, printer, gardener, blacksmith, and barber.
### WILLIAMSBURG PRINTING OFFICE
### SCHOOL BOOK PURCHASES
### 1764–66

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customers</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gentry</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgesses/Council</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justices</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Planters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavernkeepers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftspeople</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William &amp; Mary</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postriders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Virginia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequently, it was the craftsman's son who made the actual purchase. For example, William DuVal, the son of Samuel DuVal, a carpenter from Henrico County, purchased a copy of Cole's Latin-English dictionary and assorted classical works with English translations; and Joseph and Thomas Hay, sons of Williamsburg cabinetmaker and tavernkeeper Anthony Hay, bought eight schoolbooks, among them Clarke's *An Introduction to the Making of Latin*, Dyche's *Spelling Dictionary*, and Clarke's edition of Cordery's *Colloquies*. Their purchases were unusual, for they document the younger generation's interest in the rudiments of classical education and provided these artisans' sons with their first steps toward future success through education. This indeed was the case for one of Anthony Hay's sons, George Hay, who became famous as the prosecutor of Aaron Burr at his treason trial.

For the most part the craftsmen patronizing Royle's shop stuck to practical works for their instruction, but five craftsmen aspiring to social ambitions—John Bell, Matthew Davenport, Samuel Duval, Anthony Hay, and Thomas Hornsby—bought classical works in translation as well. These sales to craftspeople are significant because they serve to dispel the assertion that only wealthy planters and other professional classes were serious purchasers of books.
Not only were sons charging book sales to their fathers' accounts, as in the case of schoolbooks, but slaves, too, placed orders for or received books on behalf of their masters. Thomas Jefferson sent his slave to fetch his copy of *An Attorney's Pocket Companion* and a revised edition of the Virginia laws. Governor Fauquier's slave visited the printing office to pick up his master's copy of Landon Carter's latest political pamphlet; Hugh Walker, a burgess from Norfolk, sent his slave on a similar mission. These indirect purchases take on a bitter irony with the realization that the actual printed laws and political pamphlets proclaiming and defending the rights of Englishmen were being placed into the hands of a people in bondage. This irony is heightened by knowledge of future events and the struggle for freedom that occurred, first a decade later for Virginia's white populace, and then a century later for African-Americans.

The fight to emancipate African-Americans had to wait. Yet, in Williamsburg in the 1760s a new process was occurring. Virginians were becoming aware of the power of ideas in the books sold at the printing office. An expanding reading public took shape on the eve of the Revolution. There was a "democratization of gentility" at work here as ambitious folk from the middling class turned to books to advance themselves. Governor Berkeley was
right: the press and schools had unwittingly conspired to undermine the culture of deference.

Finally, Virginians' interest in reading was becoming strikingly more secular. From devotional works customers were shifting to books emphasizing the concerns of this world: the affairs of state, the amusement of literature, the useful handbooks of self-help. A new culture was emerging as seen in the sales of the bookstore—one that might be ready to support Thomas Jefferson's insistence upon utility and his call for a separation of church and state.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


3. The Scottish tobacco factor, William Cunninghame, claimed that a store in Virginia drew most of its customers from a radius of twelve or fourteen miles. William Cunninghame to John Turner, October 6, 1771, William Cunninghame & Co. Letter Books, 1767-1774, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, microfilm copy at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library, Special Collections. The author is indebted to the Stiversons for this reference.

4. "Virginia Gazette Daybook, 1764-1766."

5. Ibid. passim.


7. Both Hunter and Royle printed almanacs every year and advertised their availability in autumn issues of the preceding year's Virginia Gazette.


14. William Lily, *A Short Introduction to Grammar* (London: various eds.); Mathurin Cordier *Corderii Colloquorium Centura Selecta; or, A Select Century of Cordery's Colloquies*. . . . By John Clarke (London and York: various eds.); John Clarke, *An Introduction to the Making of Latin* (London: various eds.); George Fisher, *Arithmethick in the Plainest and Most Concise Method hitherto Extant* (London: various eds.); Samuel Richardson *The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or, the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe, and Sir Charles Grandison* (London: 1756 & 1764); and Charles Allen *The Polite Lady; or, A Course of Female Education*. . . . (London: 1760). Both the Stiversons and John Molnar have compiled extensive bibliographies on all the works sold and advertised and also investigated what editions would have been available at the time. For long running titles such as Lily's Grammar, several editions would have been available for sale. See Stiverson, "Books Both Useful and Entertaining . . .," Part II. pp. 219-428; and Molnar, "Retail Book Advertisements . . .," Appendix II. pp. 337-834.

The author is indebted to John E. Molnar and the Stiversons for their research in compiling the bibliographical citations and identifying editions.


17. "Virginia Gazette Daybook, 1764-1766," passim.
CHAPTER III
WILLIAMSBURG PRINTERS AND THEIR WORLD

William Hunter and Joseph Royle were much more than successful businessmen selling their wares to an expanding market. Their product was ideas and influence. What they chose to sell or print was directly related to popular taste or political persuasion. The previous chapter analyzed book sales in depth. This chapter attempts to show how the ideas that Hunter and Royle sold were connected to social, economic, and political developments in the period from 1750 to 1766 and how they affected the lives of mid-eighteenth-century Virginians.

Hunter's and Royle's activities can be analyzed in many ways. In one regard, the growth of book sales from Hunter's to Royle's management of the printing offices mirrored the growth in the colony. As the population of Virginia increased and moved west, so did the number of customers and sales of books. In other respects as well, the activities of the printers were indicative of developments occurring in the colonies. During the 1760s business and social connections between the colonies increased significantly. This growing economic and information network based on
commerce and correspondence imitated a smaller one that already existed among printers throughout the colonies. Through kinship, marriage, or professional associations, printers had developed a close network with their colleagues in other colonies, as evidenced with the Green family which created a dynasty of printers in New England. In Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin epitomized the colonial craftsman who had forged business connections with other printers in several colonies. William Parks and Benjamin Franklin had formed a business arrangement that was continued after Parks's death by William Hunter. Hunter and Franklin corresponded for several years in terms that extended beyond polite business communication. Franklin knew Hunter's family and William Hunter was also an acquaintance of Mrs. Franklin. In fact, when Hunter returned from England in the late spring of 1759, Franklin entrusted him with letters for his wife which, upon his arrival in Williamsburg, Hunter dispatched on a ship headed directly for Philadelphia.

The two printers regularly exchanged shipments of printing supplies and books for each other's use or for sale. Franklin sent Hunter a parcel of books and received in exchange 45 copies of A Young Man's Companion. He also purchased various bound books and books in sheets from Hunter. When they settled his estate in 1764, Hunter's
executors paid Franklin £1130.10.5 1/2 sterling for Hunter's open account.\(^5\)

Another link in the Franklin and Hunter relationship was their joint appointment as deputy postmasters for the American colonies in 1753.\(^6\) In addition to splitting a salary of £300 each, they shared the expenses of operating the post. In 1755 Franklin set up an account with Hunter for "half wintering the horses" and in 1756 posted a charge of £3.2.0 sterling for "part of 3 doz. post-horns".\(^7\)

Hunter also developed ties with other printers. One such craftsman was James Davis from New Bern, North Carolina, who had been indentured to William Parks and with whom Hunter may have worked. In 1742 Davis bought his freedom papers from Parks.\(^8\) He later moved to North Carolina where he became the colony's first public printer. Subsequently, he ordered books from Hunter.\(^9\) Similarly, Hunter purchased books from Jonas Green, a printer and bookseller in Annapolis.\(^10\)

This widespread network was not surprising considering the nature of the printing trade. During the first half of the eighteenth century, skilled printers were in demand in the Southern colonies. Colonial governments in Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina invited printers to set up shop and apply for the position of public printer.\(^11\) Once appointed, these enterprising men usually added to their income by printing newspapers, almanacs, or other
items. Frequently, they sold books as well. With this diversification, it made sense to maintain strong business connections with printers in other colonies who could ship needed supplies—paper, type, and ink—and would often agree to receive printed goods in exchange.

In creating a market for books and supplies, printers were also creating a marketplace for ideas. Printers not only exchanged books and supplies, but also news. In an effort to fill the pages of their newspapers, colonial editors regularly repeated newsworthy items from other papers.12

Finally, complementing the movement of books, materials, and news between Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia was a growth in correspondence. During the early 1750s Hunter was receiving letters in the post or by packet from places like Annapolis, New York, and Bermuda. He took in £60.17.07 as postmaster during the period 1750–1752. Fourteen years later, Royle was to realize almost three times that amount, £179.04.6. Royle had so much business that he split his postal operations into two accounts: a Virginia route, which took in £20.13.08, and a Northern Postal Line for correspondence from outside the colony, which had by far the bulk of activity and produced for Royle an income of over £158. Colonists from all over North America were writing to pursue business or exchange ideas with their Virginia "cousins."
Busy as they were, selling books and stationery; printing newspapers, almanacs, and legal forms; running a bindery; managing a post office; serving as public printer; and, in the case of William Parks, operating a paper mill; the Williamsburg printers also published and sold local imprints. Decisions on what to print were frequently shaped by the amount of materials on hand. The chronic scarcity of type and paper that North American printers complained of during the colonial period guaranteed that most of the Williamsburg imprints would be pithy pamphlets, concise treatises, or slim tomes. Decisions on what to print and sell were also determined, to some extent, by the energy and entrepreneurial spirit of the printer.

Always seeking new business opportunities, William Parks had, in the twenty years that he managed the Printing Office, printed thirty-one titles, a weekly newspaper, an annual almanac, legal forms, acts of assembly, and journals of the House of Burgesses. His output was impressive not only in terms of quantity and quality but also in its variety. Parks issued the first cookbook and the first history of Virginia to be printed in America. His choices reflected that he was always conscious of his readers' tastes. Their interests guided his decisions, whether he was reprinting the ever popular English religious work The Whole Duty of Man by Richard Allestree or publishing the handy manual, Every Man His Own Doctor: Or, The Poor
Planter's Physician, written by the Maryland farmer John Tennant, which rapidly went through three editions and was issued again in a fourth edition twenty years later.

Parks was alert not only to readers' tastes but also to politically correct behavior. When he issued Typographia: An Ode on Printing in 1730, the piece was remarkable for its subject matter—a discourse on printing—and also for its praise of Lieutenant-Governor William Gooch, who had approved the General Assembly's offer to invite Parks to set up shop in Williamsburg and become public printer. Parks was aware that he served at the pleasure of the government. His printing of Typographia tacitly acknowledged that debt. It was an obligation that was to weigh heavily on him and, in future years, to influence what pieces another public printer, Joseph Royle, decided to print.

Parks' successor, William Hunter, issued several imprints during the eleven years that he managed the Printing Office. He supplemented his income by offering sixteen different works. Although Parks had issued a few pieces of substantial length—E. Smith's The Compleat Housewife: . . . , and William Stith's The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia—all of Hunter's imprints were short pieces under one hundred pages in length. In terms of quantity the number of different imprints that Hunter offered was comparable with Parks's, sixteen in eleven years for Hunter versus thirty-one in
twenty years for Parks. However, when more closely examined, Hunter's output, and especially his initiative, look less impressive, since four of the works were printed at the request of the General Assembly and at least seven others were commissioned by the authors.

Ten of the works Hunter issued were religious in nature; a fact not surprising considering that Hunter sold more religious books than any other type except almanacs. Of the ten titles seven were sermons, three of which had been delivered to the General Assembly and were printed at that body's request. Three other religious titles, two sermons and one book of verse, were written by the Reverend Samuel Davies, who paid Hunter to publish them. Davies, a dissident minister, convinced Hunter, Virginia's public printer, to print and sell these works, which espoused a method of worship and clerical structure different from that of the Anglican Church, the official religion of the colony. In accepting Davies's job Hunter was following the customary practice of other colonial printers of that period. Always eager to supplement their income, printers would often agree to print works and articles written by individuals who often espoused a different view from the authorities. Printers defended their actions as exercising their right of freedom of the press. This practice, common throughout the colonies up until 1765 and the Stamp Act crisis, allowed dissidents to have access to the press. However, in times
of bitter controversy, those whose views were seen as too extreme would find that a printer's defense of freedom of the press came in second to his or her fear of angering customers and upsetting political patronage. In this case, Hunter does not seem to have been criticized for printing Davies's views. Indeed, except for his perennial bestseller, The Virginia Almanack, Hunter sold more copies of Davies's poems than any other work. Davies's supporters bought dozens of copies to distribute in an effort to spread their faith. Their efforts were part of the Great Awakening and the growth of evangelical Christianity through the Piedmont and the valley of Virginia. A supporter of this movement, Davies was able to use Hunter's press to share his views with a wider audience.

Just as Virginia readers were interested in religion, they also wished to keep current with political issues. Ironically, what captured their attention was an issue involving the Anglican clergy. Burgesses Richard Bland and Landon Carter first described it in two political pamphlets defending the actions of the General Assembly against attack by the clergy. This controversy, the Parson's Cause, was not insignificant. It lasted almost six years and produced a series of pamphlets that represented both sides of the issue. Whereas in the early 1750s the Printing Office had sold more religious titles than any other type of work except for almanacs; by the end of 1765, sales in religious
titles were replaced by pamphlets whose purpose was alternatively to criticize or to defend the righteousness of the Anglican clergy's attack on the General Assembly. For Hunter's customers the focus of attention shifted in the late 1750s from absorbing religion by reading devotional fare to following a public debate in which the Anglican clergy adopted the role of a special interest group protecting its income and legal rights.

In issuing these political pamphlets, Hunter did not act out of a sense of public duty. Burgesses Landon Carter and Richard Bland undoubtedly paid him to do the work. Paying the printer to publish one's views, although not a new practice, was to become the future modus operandi for the owners of the Printing Office. In reviewing the total output of Hunter's shop, aside from the switch from religion to political works, it is evident that from 1757 on Hunter did not issue any imprints on his own initiative. From that year until his death in 1761, every work he printed was paid for by authors eager to see their words in print. In a shift from his predecessor, Hunter no longer acted the role of publisher but only accepted works on commission.

Joseph Royle continued this practice of printing only by request. During the five years that he operated the Printing Office, with the exception of his printing the text of the Stamp Act in 1765, all the imprints he offered could be considered products of a vanity press. Two imprints were
handy manuals designed to benefit Virginia farmers. Inexpensively priced at two shillings sixpence each, they were affordable to the middling farmer. Buckner Stith, a planter and surveyor from Brunswick County, wrote a treatise on the cultivation of tobacco. Stith paid Royle to print 1,000 copies of this useful book. Royle advertised the work in the Virginia Gazette and sold several copies to different planters as well as probably giving some copies to Stith to distribute.

John Wily, a burgess from Hanover County, wanted to encourage a new industry in Virginia with his 1765 pamphlet, A Treatise on the Propagation of Sheep. In his preface he wrote that his work was "intended chiefly for the Benefit of the common and poorer Sort of People." Neither Wily's treatise nor his idea were popular with Royle's customers. Eight copies were purchased on credit and presumably not that many more with cash; furthermore, the development of a thriving industry based on sheep and wool never caught on. Nevertheless, both Stith's and Wily's treatises were written and printed to serve perceived needs in the colony by authors who used the Williamsburg press to address current issues.

The remaining four imprints represented opposing sides of the continuing controversy surrounding the Parson's Cause. Earlier, Hunter had printed two pamphlets defending actions taken by the General Assembly which had had an
adverse effect on the clergy's income from the sale of tobacco. Fortunately for Hunter, the Reverend John Camm, spokesman for the clergy, was in England during that period carrying his cause to the Bishop of London. Camm did not have a prepared response available for Hunter to print as a rebuttal to the burgesses. Royle, however, soon found himself squarely in the middle of the controversy. In 1764 he printed Landon Carter's *The Rector Detected:* . . . This time, having returned from England, Camm had a prepared response that he asked Royle to print. Royle refused to do so believing it too strong an attack against the General Assembly, his employer as public printer.\(^{21}\)

Royle's predicament was not the first of that nature for a Williamsburg printer. William Parks had experienced a similar difficulty fifteen years earlier in 1749. Parks had got into trouble for not printing an order of the Council in the *Virginia Gazette,* a decision guaranteed to anger the House of Burgesses. Being caught in a very difficult situation, he issued a written apology:

To the Honourable the Council

William Parks, Printer humbly begs leave to lay before Your Honours, the great Concern and Affliction he labours under, by having inadvertently fallen under your Displeasure . . .

Parks spoke for future printers when, after explaining the circumstances in which he found himself—either antagonizing the Council or the Burgesses—he wrote:
He [Parks] therefore must humbly prays, Your Honours will be pleased to take into Consideration, the above Circumstances, the Infirmities of human Nature, and the Difficulties a Man must naturally meet with, in the Struggle with himself, when compell'd to be an Instrument towards his own Ruin.  

Royle's refusal to print Camm's response was not that unusual. Although colonial printers before the Stamp Act of 1765 claimed to operate a free press that was open to all, they routinely exercised self-censorship when they thought the piece to be printed was too inflammatory. In an apology for printing a critical letter, Benjamin Franklin was speaking for his trade as a whole when he declared that printers "continually discourage the Printing of great Numbers of bad Things, and stifle them in the Birth." These trade strategies helped keep printers from antagonizing their customers. In this particular case, Camm was forced to leave the colony to find a printer who would accept the job. He succeeded in Annapolis, where Jonas Green undertook the work. In 1765, however, after having printed yet another pamphlet for the burgesses, this time written by Richard Bland, Royle changed his mind and issued two separate rebuttals written by Camm which were presumably more moderate in tone than the earlier piece that Royle had refused.

In sum, the Parson's Cause generated seven pamphlets, six of which were printed by the Williamsburg press. This issue produced revenue for the printers, but it also put
them in a delicate situation. Hereafter, printers would be forced to decide whether to attempt to please both sides of a conflict and to maintain an open press—as Royle had ultimately chosen—or to throw the support of their press to only one side.

Being a printer in colonial America during the period of the Stamp Act crisis through the early years of the Revolution meant walking a fine line between increasingly polarized groups. Contracting to print an article, news report, or pamphlet could be risky, but so could refusing to do so. Charleston's printer Peter Timothy described himself as changing from "the most popular" to "the most unpopular Man in the Province" for suspending publication of his Gazette rather than issuing the paper in defiance of the Stamp Act. Even more embarrassing and unsettling to him was the action of Charlestonians of setting up a rival press that would more actively support the patriot cause. For the printer sometimes not just a single economic venture, but an entire livelihood could be at stake.24

How Royle would have responded to this increasing polarization in the late 1760s can only be speculated. He died in early 1766, and Alexander Purdie, Royle's foreman, took over management of the printing office, including the job of public printer. Purdie, however, was not successful in maintaining the balancing act of pleasing both his customers and his employers. In 1766 a group of Virginians
invited William Rind, a Maryland printer, to set up shop a short way down Duke of Gloucester Street from Purdie's establishment. Thomas Jefferson's recollection of that occurrence was "we had about one press, and that having the whole business of the government, and no competitor for public favor, nothing disagreeable to the governor could be got into it. We procured Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper." William Rind came without hesitation and emphasized the difference between Purdie and himself with his first issue of the Virginia Gazette, which bore the statement on its masthead "Open to all Parties, but Influenced by None." His intent was clearly evident in the amount of space he devoted to the Stamp Act controversy—over eighty percent—with news of the crisis and reactions to it from Virginia, Boston, Philadelphia, and London. By contrast, Alexander Purdie and John Dixon's Virginia Gazette, printed the same day, bore the conventional news from abroad—recycled from other newspapers—and buried their one article on the Stamp Act in the middle of page 2.

To develop a commercially viable enterprise, however, Rind could not rely just on political debate. He needed to solicit subscribers and advertisers. Within two issues he was printing several advertisements from all over the colony. This new business venture, established to provide an alternate voice for Virginians, succeeded and Rind
discovered the economy in Virginia had expanded to be able
to sustain more than one printer. From 1766 until 1779,
when Alexander Purdie died, there were to be at least two
presses operating in Williamsburg.

Printing short pamphlets and newspapers may have served
a public need, but they did not bring in large profits to
the Williamsburg printers. It was their trade as bookseller
that generated substantial income.²⁷ To assure these
profits, the managers of the printing office had to be
attuned to their readers' tastes. William Hunter took an
active interest in both the books imported from England and
the terms offered by the book dealer. In 1755 he switched
book dealers, lured away from Samuel Birt, with whom Parks
had traded, to the more lucrative profits offered by another
London dealer James Rivington. Hunter was to regret this
association with Rivington, who offered lower prices to
entice him and then sent unsatisfactory shipments that
included "a great many extreme dull books."²⁸ Hunter's
business dealings with Rivington did not last five years.
At the time of his death he was ordering books from William
Johnstone, a dealer who continued to sell books to Royle.²⁹

Hunter knew the importance of stocking titles popular
in London which would appeal to his customers and which,
because of their high markup, would also give him a
relatively larger profit. On average, Hunter made a
30 percent profit on the sale of books, with higher
percentages for novels and popular literature and a lower percent for the sale of lawbooks.\textsuperscript{30} To promote sales, Hunter advertised these newly arrived titles in the *Virginia Gazette* and in editions of the *Virginia Almanack*. On March 20, 1751, he issued a supplement to the *Virginia Gazette* completely devoted to books for sale, and a few months later he listed over two hundred titles in one advertisement.\textsuperscript{31}

By the time that Joseph Royle was managing the bookstore, colonists' appetite for the eighteenth century's newest literary form, the novel, had increased tremendously. Royle sold current titles by popular authors, such as *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* by Anthony Smollett and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* by Samuel Richardson.\textsuperscript{32} He also carried more racy titles, one notable example being John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, more commonly referred to as *Fanny Hill*.\textsuperscript{33} From 1764 to 1766 Royle sold at least nine copies of Cleland's work, a fact that appears to belie earlier travellers' reports that Williamsburg was not at all cosmopolitan but rather a "most wretched contriv'd Affair for the Capital of a Country" and "far from being a place of any consequence."\textsuperscript{34} Even so, in some instances Royle carefully entered the sale of this potentially controversial book under a false title, with a small difficult-to-see note at the bottom of the page recording the true identity of the
work. More than likely his action was designed to save embarrassment to his patron.

Most of the novels that Hunter and Royle sold were bought by members of the gentry, but that was not always the case. Williamsburg doctors Peter Hay and John Sequeyra were regular purchasers of novels. Merchants such as John Gilchrist of Norfolk purchased Charles Johnstone's Chrysal: or, The Adventures of a Guinea from the printing office. A craftsman, Charles Taliaferro, a Williamsburg chair and coachmaker, bought Robinson Crusoe and an English translation of The Devil Upon Two Sticks, by Alain Rene Le Sage, for leisure reading. Nor was Virginians' taste for novels limited to those who lived near the colonial capital. Thomas Peachy, county clerk from Amelia; Colonel Philip Rootes, sheriff of King and Queen County; and John Mercer, a planter from Hanover County, shopped for novels at Mr. Royle's establishment.

Selling novels was obviously a profitable venture for the printing office. The doctors and craftsmen who purchased them usually would buy one or at most two titles at a time. In contrast, when members of Virginia's gentry visited the printing office, they regularly bought more than two novels at one visit. Colonel Benjamin Grymes, a large landowner in Spotsylvania County, and William Fleming, a wealthy planter from Goochland County, purchased eight novels each during one visit to the printing office.35
Grymes and Fleming may have been unusual in their passion for belles lettres; however, it appears from the sales that novels did not gather dust on Royle's shelves, but were quickly snapped up by eager readers.

While some planters were content to purchase only novels for themselves, others such as Mann Page, John Page, and James Mercer supplemented their pleasure reading with lawbooks, political pamphlets, manuals, and schoolbooks for their children.

Schoolbooks made up a large portion of sales, particularly for Joseph Royle. These relatively inexpensive books were used at the College of William and Mary, at private schools in Williamsburg, and at plantations throughout Virginia by tutors. In 1752, a nine-year old John Page, the future governor of Virginia, was sent to a grammar school at the parish glebe house near his home at Rosewell in Gloucester. He remembers being forced to memorize "an insipid and unintelligible book called Lily's Grammar, one sentence of which my master never explained." Page's opinion of the book turned to high praise when his tutor "enabled me to see that it was a complete Grammar, and an excellent Key to the Latin Language."36

Page was not unusual in his admiration for the book. Almost thirty years earlier, in 1724, Robert "King" Carter lamented:

"I could wish Mr. Low had kept in the old way of teaching the Latin tongue and had made my boys
perfect in their understanding of Lillie's [sic] grammar. . . ."\(^{37}\)

For over two hundred years *Lily's Grammar* had been a popular schoolbook going through numerous editions since its first appearance in 1540. William Hunter could easily have been the supplier of the book to the young Page. Donald Robertson, who ran a private school in King and Queen County in the 1760s, used several of the titles that Royle stocked for teaching classes, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Dryden's edition of Virgil, Salmon's *A New Geographical and Historical Grammar*, Dodsley's *Select Fables of Esop*, and the *Preceptor*. In his account book Robertson listed the students who attended and the titles he used in his instruction.\(^{38}\)

Page's recollection of the title of the book he used as a child is unusual. Not because the book he used was so rare. Actually, *Lily's Grammar* had been a standard text for educating children for hundreds of years. The reason is that schoolbooks were not considered important or expensive enough to deserve reference by name. Printers very rarely identified them in their advertisements. They were inexpensive items designed to be read and used and then discarded. Therefore, they were not bound in leather to preserve them or give them an elegant look.\(^{39}\) The idea that schoolbooks were not expected to last was demonstrated by tavernkeeper Anthony Hay who purchased four copies of
Lily's Grammar, presumably one for each of his sons. Whereas most books were shared with family members, schoolbooks were frequently purchased with the idea of one user to a book. This idea is supported in the small numbers of eighteenth-century schoolbooks that have survived. Indeed, the fact that only a few exist strengthens the argument that these books were not designed to last a long time and that they were not treated with any particular care for their preservation by the user. The few schoolbooks that do survive show the marks of heavy use. The Prentis Library, belonging to an eighteenth-century family of Williamsburg merchants, contains a few schoolbooks. Some of them bear the signature of one owner, Joseph Prentis. One in particular, Fisher's *Arithmetick in the Plainest and Most Concise Methods* . . . contains extensive doodlings by the young owner intended to entertain him.40

But schoolbooks provided only the barest minimum needed for a practical education. The Anthony Hays, the Henry Wetherburns, the William Prentises, that is, craftsmen, artisans, and merchants bought grammars, spellers, dictionaries, arithmetic books, and manuals on conduct for their children. The Carters, Pages, and Mercers--i.e. Virginia's gentry--bought all of the above plus classical works in Latin, Greek, and occasionally Hebrew to supply an essential component of a genteel education that was otherwise lacking. This conviction that familiarity with
the classics was necessary to a young man's education was rooted in the concept of a gentleman, which had its earliest origins in the Renaissance and evolved with slight modifications over the following centuries. It consisted of an inherited pattern of behavior composed of courtesy, grace of body, dignity of bearing, and polished speech. A gentleman extolled certain virtues such as fortitude, temperance, prudence, and justice and rooted them in a code of conduct that subscribed to truth and honor.41

To become a gentleman it was necessary to incorporate the values and exhibit the behavior associated with it. Marrying into the gentry did not automatically bestow gentility on the newlywed. Learning, however, was one distinguishing characteristic of a gentleman and became a popular tool for the aspiring social climber in England through the universities and inns of court and later in Virginia. A gentleman's learning needed to be extensive but not necessarily deep. Ideas of what constituted a good education were fairly standard over time with only a few minor variations. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a continuing emphasis upon classical authors in Latin and Greek as well as English. In 1622, in his Compleat Gentleman, Henry Peacham recommended a wide reading in classical authors; and a century later, Daniel Defoe in his The Compleat English Gentleman (1729) repeated Peacham's advice with a slight modification. Defoe believed
an eighteenth-century English gentleman's education was adequate if his knowledge of the classics was only in translation.42 This allowance was not entirely accepted, certainly not in Virginia. Only two years earlier, in writing the statutes for the College of William and Mary, the masters specified rules for the curricula and had dictated for the grammar school:

let the Latin and Greek Tongues be well taught. As for Rudiments and Grammars, and Classick Authors of each Tongue, let them teach the same books which by Law or Custom are used in the Schools of England.43

This notion of familiarity with the classics in their original language persisted at William and Mary and in home education as well. Almost fifty years later, in 1773, Philip Fithian, tutor to Robert Carter's children, wrote in his diary about one of Carter's younger sons:

Bob this morning begg'd me to learn him lattin; his Reason he tells me is that yesterday Mrs. Taylor told him he must not have either of her Daughters unless he learn'd Latin. . 44

More important than the language of the text, however, was the fact that Virginians were buying schoolbooks in numbers that increased over time. First William Parks, then William Hunter and Joseph Royle, capitalized on this ready market and stocked their shelves accordingly. While their actions filled a need and produced income, neither William Hunter's nor Joseph Royle's interest in education was totally profit-oriented or self-serving. Hunter designated
in his will that £7 pounds be paid to Ann Wager for teaching students at the Negro school, a venture that he had begun in association with Benjamin Franklin and which had given him great pleasure. Joseph Royle also took a philanthropic interest in education, and in his will named the establishment of a free school to be administered by the vestry of Bruton Parish, as a contingency beneficiary. Their actions reveal two printers who realized the importance of educating those Virginians who for economic and social reasons could not provide for themselves.

Virginia printers served several purposes. They imported English culture and values of the English gentry and made them available at a price to all their customers. They also used their printing press and bookstore as a forum for colonists who would protest against English economic and political policies. Their bookstore was a marketplace where young gentlemen and aspiring young men from the middling class could acquire the tools needed for an education. With the addition of the post office, Parks, Hunter, and Royle established an information clearinghouse that served to transport newspapers, almanacs, and letters. This commercial establishment located on a small lot on Duke of Gloucester Street broke the hold of the English gentleman's library by providing middling and upper class Virginians with a print culture that was dedicated to their interests and that they could call their own.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


8. York County Records, Orders, Wills, Book 19, p. 113.


15. Ibid., p.20.


18. The daybooks are particularly useful in supplying evidence of the printing and sale of this pamphlet since unfortunately, no copies of this pamphlet have been recovered.

19. John Wily, A Treatise on the Propagation of Sheep, the Manufacture of Wool, and the Cultivation and Manufacture of Flax, With Directions for Making Several Utensils for the Business (Williamsburg: Printed by J. Royle, 1765). The one copy known to exist is at the Virginia State Library & Archives in Richmond.

20. Wily, p. 3.


28. William Strahan to David Hall, July 11, 1758, quoted in Stiverson, Printing and Society in Early America, p. 156. Rivington's career is an interesting story. A successful book dealer in London in the 1750s, he overspent his means and was forced to declare bankruptcy. Nevertheless, he remained solvent enough to move to Philadelphia and open a bookstore there in 1761. During the 1760s Rivington was involved in a number of business ventures in several colonies, but by the end of the decade confined his activities to New York, where he operated a press. By the eve of the Revolution, his open press policy angered the Sons of Liberty and caused them to burn his press. Rivington left for England but returned to New York in 1777 carrying an appointment as King's printer. Following the war, in return for his service, the British army granted two lifetime commissions at half pay to Rivington's sons. See Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XV (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), pp. 637-38.


30. Stiverson, pp. 153, 162. It is difficult to determine the wholesale cost of books that Hunter bought; however a few records allow for some calculations. The Stiverson's analysis of the
daybooks shows that Hunter realized a 26.2 percent average profit from the sale of lawbooks over a six-month period. On an item basis, Hunter's income from two novels, Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews and The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl was more lucrative, bringing him 42.9 percent and 36.9 percent profit respectively. To determine these percentages, the Stiverfasons converted the amount Hunter paid for the books in sterling to Virginia currency using the exchange rate of the period and compared it to the retail purchase price.

31. *Virginia Gazette* for March 20, 1751 (Supplement) and May 24, 1751.

32. Both Sir Launcelot Greaves and Sir Charles Grandison were first published in 1762.


34. All of the customers with the exception of Rivington and Brown, a New York book dealer, bought one copy. They were John Campbell of Yorktown, Col. Philip Rootes of King and Queen County, James Roscow of Warwick County, John Wayles of Charles City County, and William Byrd of Charles City County. Rivington and Brown bought four copies and were the only other book dealer with whom Royle had any trade during the period of the daybooks. [Edward Kimber], "Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America in the year 1736," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st series, 15(April 1907):223 and Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North-America. In the Years 1759 and 1760. With Observations upon the State of the Colonies*, 2d ed. (London: 1775), p. 6, quoted in Stiverson, *Printing and Society in Early America*, p. 137.


36. "Governor Page," *The Virginia Historical Register and Literary Note Book* 3(July 1850):144-145.


40. George Fisher, Arithmetick in the Plainest and Most Concise Method Hitherto Extant . . . . (Belfast: Printed by and for James Magee, 1775).

41. Wright, The First Gentlemen of Virginia, pp. 5-17.

42. Ibid., p. 13.


Bibliography


Ewing, Galen W. "Early Teaching of Science at the College of William and Mary in Virginia." *Bulletin of The*
College of William and Mary in Virginia 32, no. 4 (April 1938): 3-29.


The History of the College of William and Mary From Its Foundation, 1693 to 1870. Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1870.

Ingram, John E. "The Art, Craft, and Business of Bookbinding in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1730-1780." Unpublished manuscript.


A Provisional List of Alumni, Grammar School Students, Members of the Faculty, and Members of the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, from 1693 to 1888 . . . . Richmond, Division of Purchase and Printing, 1941.


Roeber, A. G. *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810.*
Williamsburg: The Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981.


Thomas, Isaiah. The History of Printing in America . . . 2d ed. Albany, New York: Published under the supervision of a Special Committee of the American Antiquarian Society, 1874.

Virginia Gazette. Williamsburg, Virginia. 1736-1780. (Photocopies of the extant issues of the various editions of the newspaper.)

"The Virginia Gazette Daybooks: 1750-1752, 1764-1766." 2 vols. Photostat copies from the originals owned by the Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.


Webb-Prentis Collection. Department of the Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

Webb-Prentis Papers. Alderman Library, University of Virginia.


York County Court Records, Virginia. Deeds; Deeds and Bonds; Deeds, Orders, and Wills; Judgments and Orders; Orders and Wills; and Wills and Inventories.
Vita

Susan Stromei Berg
