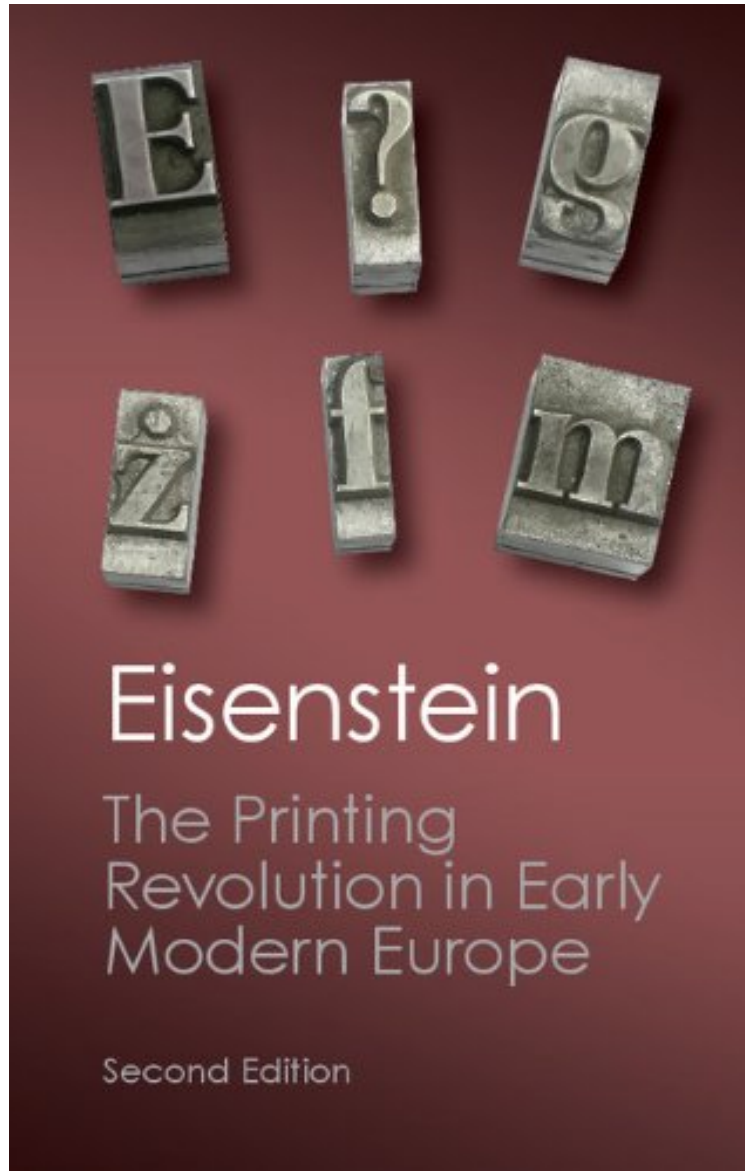


[E-BOOK] The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Canto Classics)

## The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Canto Classics)

*Von Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*

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**Von Elizabeth L. Eisenstein : The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Canto Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Canto Classics):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. The printing press = the World Wide WebVon Ein KundeOccasionally, a book has initial, unseen qualities that must wait

many years before society reaches a point where it can fully appreciate it. Dr. Eisenstein's wonderful work is actually an abridged version for the lay historian of her much longer, more scholarly and definitive two-volume work on how the printing press changed civilization. Our transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based civilization will probably create the most extensive and radical transformation of our civilization since the printing press. Knowledge of how the printing press changed European civilization may help us understand the changes resulting from the Internet today. As Dr. Eisenstein explains, the Protestant Reformation would almost certainly never have occurred without the printing press. Will there be an equivalent movement today? Dr. Eisenstein highlights how the printing press defined the linguistic and cultural borders of present-day Europe, encouraged the use and teaching of the vernacular, and eliminated Latin as the international tongue of the educated classes. I wonder, will the WWW again reconstitute our current Babel of languages into a single language, English, as it once atomized the common language of Latin among literate people? Eisenstein illustrates the printing press' role as the chief cause of the elevation of the individual over the social unit during the Enlightenment. For the first time, individual authorship could exist in a way that was impossible in the age of scribes. It brought the kind of immediate personal fame and recognition that was inconceivable in the Dark Ages. Galileo's *Siderius nuncius*, for example, made him an overnight sensation. Will we see further radicalization of the individual relative to society, now that the WWW has made it possible to pursue "publication" even more narrowly, without the need for a broad and popular readership? For a preview of how this is already occurring, visit GeoCities on the WWW. According to Eisenstein, the loss of knowledge in the age of scribes was a constant and inevitable consequence of limited numbers of laboriously hand-made copies. Whenever truly new knowledge was gained, it had no mechanism for dispersal. The previous invention of clocks and the knowledge of how to make them had been lost to the Chinese when Europeans discovered them, because the absence of printing in China limited the knowledge base. Their calendars were off, and they had to be taught all over again by the Europeans how to correct them. The WWW is a far more effective means for the dispersal of knowledge today even than printing. Will it create similar opportunities in novel thinking? Eisenstein points out that the perishability of written documents, even on sheepskin, meant that few scholars were granted access to them, and documents were kept locked away for fear of theft or just simple wear. They were unavailable to the public, which couldn't read anyway, and even to most scholars. She explains how the very concept of the term 'discovery' has changed, by describing how the search for knowledge in the scribal culture of the Middle Ages actually meant trying to recover the works of the Ancients, not the discovery of new things. Eisenstein explains how, with the advent of the printing press, it suddenly became possible to preserve knowledge simply by printing such large numbers of books that humanity need never again fear such a tragic loss as occurred with the dispersal of the works gathered together at the great Egyptian library at Alexandria. The cost of books fell off a cliff, making knowledge available to nearly everyone. As she quotes in her book: "In 1483, the Ripoli Press charged three florins per quintero for setting up and printing Ficino's translation of Plato's Dialogues. A scribe might have charged one florin per quintero for duplicating the same work. The Ripoli Press produced 1,025 copies; the scribe would have turned out one." By comparison to what books cost in the Age of Scribes, they became virtually free. Will a similar revolution occur when the cost of telecommunications falls off a cliff? Eisenstein feels that the use of the small numbers of works available to teachers in the universities of Medieval Europe, and even early modern Europe, greatly retarded the progress of learning. As she states, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler "... had an opportunity to survey a wider range of records and to use more reference guides than any astronomer before...". The sheer number of works to which the young Tycho Brahe had access surpassed the best libraries of medieval and ancient times. They allowed him to leave school, educate himself, compare alternative explanations unavailable to his teachers, and form new theories, without the stifling restrictions of centuries of traditional university thinking. It is not a stretch for us to imagine a new world in which the WWW will create similar changes in the way people learn. It will make possible widespread, cheap, unlimited knowledge and teaching, at a fraction of the cost of traditional universities. Why limit the number of students, meeting times and places for courses on the WWW the way physical locations do? Why should some courses even have an end? It will make it possible for individuals to pursue individual study at any age, and without restriction as to time or place. Will this cause the kinds of intellectual breakthroughs today that the printing press made possible in the enlightenment? As Dr. Eisenstein says, "Combinatory intellectual activity, as Arthur Koestler has suggested, inspires many creative acts." If the WWW isn't combinatory with a vengeance, nothing is. Eisenstein devotes considerable space to how the advent of the printing press produced dramatic changes in language, social behavior, government power and the movement of intellectual and financial capital. She explains how the existence of the Index (a list by Catholic scholars and the Vatican of prohibited publications), and extensive restrictions in Catholic countries on what printers could publish, caused a massive flight of intellectual and financial capital to the Protestant countries, where there were fewer restrictions on printing, a situation that explains the relative technological inferiority of Southern European countries to this day. According to Dr. Eisenstein: "The influx of religious refugees into Calvin's Geneva in the 1550s 'radically' altered the professional structure of the city. The number of printers and booksellers jumped from somewhere between three and six to some three hundred or more. ...Geneva gained in the 1550s at French expense" Will we see a similar flight of capital today from countries like France and China that restrict their citizens' use of the WWW? Will widespread

government restriction of encryption technology cripple their countries' technological superiority? Who will benefit, and who will suffer? Eisenstein shows the many ways in which the printing press caused dramatic changes in the ways people associated, fracturing society in multiple new directions. Does this presage the extensive new divisions within our culture today? Will it make political parties as presently constituted irrelevant? Will it drive a wedge between different cultures? This book was written in 1983, long before the explosion of the WWW., so Dr. Eisenstein did not consciously pursue parallels with our current information revolution. However, this makes the incredible similarity of the social and technological changes she notes even more remarkable, since they were not consciously drawn.

Robert Loest, Ph.D. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Astute, insightful scholarship on a crucial topic.

Von Rolland H. Wright Professor Eisenstein has answered a question I have been asking myself for thirty years. I knew that "modern" Europe consisted of institutions based upon the "individual" -- protestantism, capitalism, universal education and modern science -- and that these first arose in Europe about 500 years ago. But I could not answer why then? And why Europe? I suspected that it had to do with the rise of stranger experience but could not locate a convincing historical cause for it. Print literacy first occurred to me as the cause when I read Walter Ong's book, "Orality and Literacy," which also happily cited Prof. Eisenstein's work. Her book convincingly implicates the print revolution with the rise of the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and Modern Science. Her thesis made it easy for me to see how the other three institutions could be included as well and to see the role of print in spreading "individuation" and assumptions associated with it, such as the idea of progress. It is remarkable that historians have apparently ignored for so long the role of print literacy in creating modernity. Scholars, including myself, sometimes seem to find the obvious the most inscrutable. Anyway, my personal and heartfelt thanks go to Professor Eisenstein for answering my nagging question.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Read the \*unabridged version\* | Von Brad McCormick This book is fine, but it doesn't really capture the full power of the unabridged version: "The Printing Press as an Agent of Change" (2 vols in 1; Cambridge Univ. Press -- possibly currently out of print). The unabridged version (which is still much too short!) is one of the great books of the 20th century. I just didn't see the abridged version as really "bringing home" the significance of Eisenstein's theses about the effects of print technology on Western civilization.

Kurzbeschreibung In 1979 Elizabeth Eisenstein provided the first full-scale treatment of the fifteenth-century printing revolution in the West in her monumental two-volume work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. This abridged edition, after summarising the initial changes introduced by the establishment of printing shops, goes on to discuss how printing challenged traditional institutions and affected three major cultural movements: the Renaissance, the Reformation and the rise of modern science. Also included is a later essay which aims to demonstrate that the cumulative processes created by printing are likely to persist despite the recent development of new communications technologies.

Pressestimmen "This is a good and important book. The author's clear and forceful style makes it a pleasure to read." D. P. Walker, *The New York Times*

"Eisenstein has an intimate familiarity with the great narrative of modern history since the fifteenth century. She boasts an unsurpassed feeling for the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which historians have explained great changes." *Commonweal*

Das Produkt This illustrated and abridged edition of Professor Eisenstein's major work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, gives a stimulating survey of the communications revolution of the fifteenth century.