

New Zealand, the conservation activities of Professor McKenzie, and of Mr John Brebner at the Manawatu Museum Printery; it would have to assess the small body of typographic and printing history literature so far published in this country; it would have to research the availability of increasingly obsolete letterpress printing presses, type-casting machines and ancillary equipment; and outline, in detail, and not too much passion, the sore need for a rational letterpress conservation programme, with definite links between the trade, private presses, and university presses, and with careful attention to matters of concern to typographic historians.

### *The handpress*

Perhaps I should say first that 'fine printing' of books can in principle be achieved by *any* kind of printing process on *any* kind of printing mechanism, provided that all other aspects of the book are achieved with the finest available and appropriate materials and craftsmanship. Now, as I previously hinted, there is no current agency, institution or other circumstance that makes it possible for anyone in New Zealand to receive formal training in handpress printing. Taking this with there being no tradition of handpress printing here, why do it? Obviously, as it takes a good 60 seconds to hand-ink and print one side of a sheet at the handpress, handpress printing has no realistic application in the present commercial context, and I'm not interested in pursuing the matter along the commercial line. But before I track any line at all, a number of factors require notice.

First, decent handpress printing necessitates the use of handmade papers, and such use further necessitates that the paper be dampened for printing. The brilliant American typographer Bruce Rogers (designer of one of the finest of all contemporary typefaces, Centaur) puts it this way:

... where the finest possible finished product is desired, printing on dampened paper, if skilfully done, will produce a result much superior to the ordinary dry printing. The punching of the type into the softened paper raises printing almost from a two- to a three-dimensional medium, and the slight halo or highlight created around the individual recessed letters gives a sparkle and life to a page which cannot be obtained by dry printing. Moreover, as less ink is required, a cleaner impression is possible and the vigorous pressure of the type into the paper causes the print to become an integral part of the paper, rather than merely to lie on the surface. It should suffice to say that all the fine books of the past were printed on dampened paper, including those of the modern 'revivalist' presses, such as the Kelmscott, Ashendene, Doves, etcetera.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the type should be set by hand, or, if the job is too big and needs to be machine set, the type should be re-justified by hand, or, as it's put in the trade 'put through the stick', where the 'stick' is