

# LETTERPRESS PRINTING

FROM  
1440

The German goldsmith Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press opened up new worlds for large numbers of people. Texts could now be widely distributed, which brought about great changes to science, religion, and culture.

The printed paper was hung up to dry, like washing on a line, because it had to absorb the wet print.

Johannes  
Gutenberg

Before Gutenberg invented the printing press, books had to be copied by hand. This made them extremely expensive, because it required a great deal of time and effort. Try doing it with just a couple of pages and then imagine if you had to copy hundreds of them! In China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries, we know that print with carved wooden blocks was already in use from the seventh century, but this method also took a lot of time, because the text and picture for one page had to be carved by hand into each block.

Gutenberg's talents as a goldsmith were very useful when it came to

Thanks to Gutenberg's invention, the very first newspaper was printed in Strasbourg as early as 1605.



The letters could be used over and over again. When the printing was finished, they only had to be taken apart from each other and then put together again.

making a printing press. He was able to produce different forms of letters, such as upper- and lowercase. He could put these together to create words, then separate them again and store them in a box. In order to make the letters, he used a hollow mold into which he poured a mixture of lead and other metals.

The invention of the printing press was a technological revolution. Because it was now much easier to produce books, more and more people learned to read and were able to find out about a great variety of subjects. For centuries, very few people had been able to read, and so they had the power to decide what information should be distributed and how history should be presented to the rest of the world. Thanks to Gutenberg's invention, the ability to learn other languages and study different subjects was no longer limited to the very rich. During the following century, many millions of books were printed throughout the world. This seems a lot, but it was nothing compared to the number of books that exist today. Did you know that more than 500 million copies of the *Harry Potter* books have been sold worldwide?