SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The impetus for this project lies in the contrast between the flexibility of digital publishing and the inflexibility of printed books. All reference imprints, regardless of their quality or extent, are works that are essentially obsolete the moment that they are published; their fixed physical form precludes any updating or correcting of them as new material is uncovered. By employing a digital format for such a resource, though, the work becomes a publication that can be updated regularly. This *Index of Virginia Printing* (*IVP*) has been conceived as just such an updateable reference.

Many of the standard reference works for printing in the United States are now nearing the century mark in their age, and so are in need of revision. Moreover, most are also limited by their focus, being bibliographic listings, so lacking biographical, geographical, and temporal context. In building three interconnected, relational databases, the *IVP* is intended to link those who worked in the early Virginia print trade with the locales where they worked, the people they associated with, and the imprints that they produced or distributed.

Bibliographic projects, such as this, require that one collect many small pieces of information from an even larger number of sources, both primary and secondary, before synthesizing them into a coherent entry. What follows is a description of the process employed in this project.

BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF THE VIRGINIA PRINTING TRADE TO 1820

The biographical directory in this *Index of Virginia Printing* is the foundation for the entire project. It provides a way to assess the context in which the state's pre-1821 imprints were published by linking those works to the places and times wherein they were produced through the producers themselves.

The sketches drawn here come from a mix of digital and printed source materials, which are noted at the end of each numbered entry. Some individuals portrayed in these sketches are well known, though most are not; rather, they have long been just "a name on a page" of a title recorded in a bibliography or library catalogue somewhere. However, the digitization of public-domain titles in the last two decades – along with the many digital access projects that have made available periodicals, copyrighted works, and genealogical histories long buried in widely-dispersed repositories – makes it possible to flesh out those modest name listings into descriptions of each person's working years, if not into a fuller account of their entire life. These newly-accessible sources also reveal people that have not been previously linked to the print-trade in Virginia. For many of those in this directory, the most interesting aspect of their lives found in researching their stories is one of interpersonal relationships. Previously masked family connections and veiled third-party associations reemerged via that research, so restoring contemporaneous knowledge that was lost with the passing of those historical actors from the scene.

The American Antiquarian Society's "Printers' File" was the starting point for this research. From 1927 to 1970, Avis Clarke, the society's first professionally-trained cataloguer, created a card-catalogue that records the names and trade associations of individuals working in the American print-trade before 1820 from the flow of materials that crossed her desk, both primary and secondary. In the mid-1990s, I

compiled a list of roughly 300 names from the cards that she compiled, and began comparing them to the names found in the bibliography of Virginia titles that I had developed previously from the digital catalogues of a variety of university libraries and archive repositories that were fast becoming available online. In doing so, the need to establish criteria for inclusion in this directory soon became apparent.

Recording a person's trade function was the simplest and most obvious strategy, although applying that determinant has not always straightforward. The most evident ones were those of printer, publisher, editor, bookbinder, bookseller, librarian, plate engraver, and plate printer, as well as apprentices to those functions. As those roles were hands-on in nature, I chose to not include authors and corporate groups unless specific individuals could also be identified as a publisher or editor in Virginia before 1821. Still, many of those terms were used interchangeably during the subject's lifetime, meaning that modern-day uses of those identifiers are sometimes inaccurate in the contemporary context of the person so labeled.

In applying these criteria, I eliminated about 50 names from the original AAS list. But in cross-checking that list against both my bibliography and the research notes that I had from other sources, another 100 names emerged, ones that went unrecorded by Clarke as a result of their not being "a name on a page" in one of the imprints that she handled in all those years. Aware of this blind spot in the "Printers' File," I set out to find as many others in Virginia's print trade as I could through the growing number of digital resources. Simple key-word searches in such materials ultimately unveiled another 200 names, creating the collection of some 550 persons seen in the original release of the *IVP*.

That exercise proved that digitization had finally reached a point of real usefulness in doing historical research. When I began looking into the people on my list, the volume of printed books that had been scanned and text-coded for online presentation was scant, and even fewer newspapers had been digitized. But more than a decade later, the materials now available are impressive and growing in number all the time. In this instance, my work found that nineteenth-century local histories and genealogical tomes held a wealth of unrecognized and untapped evidence on the Virginia print-trade; all that is needed to use them is the means and motivation to find the appropriate text to check. It was also often the case that content in one such digital source led to another, with neither one having an obvious connection to Virginia. Indeed, the research process created numerous links in many chains, so to speak, ones that included many unexpected associations and residences.

Still, these biographical sketches are imperfect portraits, subject to the inherent limitations of the sources used in researching them. It is expected that other materials will eventually become available as the scale and scope of digitized resources grows, and as researchers working on topics related to these individuals uncover new information about them. To be sure, the editors of the *IVP* hope that such new information will be shared with them as the way to improve this particular resource. Once such data emerges those elements of the *IVP* affected by that evidence will be revised. Hence, *IVP* users should note the date of latest version of an entry whenever it is consulted.

TRIAL CATALOGUE OF IMPRINTS PRODUCED IN VIRGINIA THROUGH 1820

The catalogue of imprints in the *Index of Virginia Printing* presents an individual record for every title now known to have been published in Virginia between 1730 and 1820, including all of those items ordered to be printed by the 1820 Assembly, which ended in March 1821.

The foundation for this section of the *Index* was built on a series of geographically-focused searches in online library catalogues for pre-1821 Virginia imprints. After building a database of the titles held by the Library of Congress, the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the College of William & Mary, the University of Virginia, and the American Antiquarian Society, that data was complemented with other records from smaller repositories identified through similar searches employing the WorldCat

service of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). That enlarged master database was then sorted into two new data sets according to the publication date and the location where each item was issued.

That sorting process, put these gathered records into a form that allowed for a ready comparison to the imprints described in the numerous reference sources that are still in use by bibliographers today. Those sources include the long-standard national bibliographies compiled by Charles Evans, Ralph R. Shaw & Richard H. Shoemaker, Roger P. Bristol, Clarence S. Brigham, Winifred Gregory, and Ray O. Hummel, Jr., as well as the Virginia specific lists created by Earle Gregg Swem, William Clayton-Torrence, Delf Norona & Charles Shetler, and Lester J. Cappon (a full list of the sources used here can be found in the accompanying project bibliography). This routine yielded a composite imprint record for each title contained in either the database, the reference works, or both. Accordingly, each of these composite records notes any item number connected to that title in whatever reference work it was listed, as well as the standard bibliographic information normally detailed in any library-catalogue record.

With a composite record in hand, a search for each title was conducted in various collections of digitized imprints online, primarily in *America's Historical Imprints* (a Readex/NewsBank service), the *Internet Archive*, and *Google Books*. If a digital copy of that title was found, the image was checked against the composite record for accuracy, principally in the wording of the title, the printing office and place of production, and the format in which it was printed, if discernable. The imprint image was also examined for internal evidence that could provide additional unrecorded information, particularly the context and personalities tied to its publication; any such information discovered was added to the note field in that particular record, as well as that of any other imprint linked to it, such as all of the Virginia-issued titles involved in an ongoing exchange of political or religious pamphlets. Each record was then given a short title form of the longer, formal title; this assignment allows for a standardization of titles for recurring publications, such as Assembly proceedings and branded almanacs. Then to complete the enhanced record, *IVP* identification-numbers for the trades-people involved in that title's publication were entered into an appropriate cross-reference field.

Lastly, the completed records were sorted chronologically by the place of publication. Those records for titles tied to the meetings of the General Assembly were usually the most straightforward to sort, as their dating could be discerned from the published journals of each session. And as the Assembly met most often in the winter, this *Index* generally clusters those imprint records in the months that ended one year and began the next. Similarly, almanacs were normally produced in the early fall each year, meaning that any multiple titles issued in any particular place, such as Richmond, were clustered in that year's listing for that locale. Dates for broadsides were regularly found internally, as they were habitually published as public notices for dated events, whether advertisements or official declarations. Once so ordered, each imprint record was assigned a two-part identifier, with the year of publication preceding a number indicating its place in that year's date sequence (as in 1776.001). After 1780, Richmond titles usually come after those generated by the Assembly at the start of each year, with imprint records from other localities following alphabetically, from Abingdon to Wythe, before a listing of those titles associated with the ensuing Assembly session closes out that year.

Within this schema, there is ample room for expansion, when necessary, by simply adding records that conform to the numerical sequence at the end of each year's group. Such flexibility is what this numbering system was intended to facilitate, recognizing that more titles are likely to be revealed in the future, even while such additions will deviate from the original arrangement. This approach runs counter to the title-based ordering employed by previous print-based bibliographies, so allowing for uncommon search strategies, ones that do not rely on titles or locations alone, as those aging standards long have, while retaining an easily managed configuration.

NARRATIVE HISTORIES OF VIRGINIA NEWSPAPERS ISSUED THROUGH 1820

This element of the *Index* consists of a series of narrative histories of the birth, life, and death of the various newspapers that were issued in Virginia before 1821. These accounts are in essence genealogies, ones that pull together all of the title variations for each journal into a single lineage, and then trace the shifts in its ownership and the reasons for those changes, where possible, as well as the larger context in which that periodical appeared.

These histories have their origin in a second bibliographic data-set separate from the one that forms the foundation of the *Imprint Catalogue* described above. Most of the entries in this database began as catalogue records from the files of the United States Newspaper Program (USNP), the project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (1982-2011) to record every extant newspaper in the country. A key in organizing that project was the assignment of unique serial numbers to each generated record by the Library of Congress (a LCCN, or Library of Congress Control Number). Often, the state repositories that contributed to that project held unique items, regularly few in number, that were not obviously a successor or precursor to any other title recorded by the USNP, and so bearing differing identification numbers. Yet, in reading the proprietor names and publication dates in the records of those dispersed holdings, it was possible to connect disparate titles to one another once those records were compiled into a single data set. That process revealed that the more than 430 newspaper titles issued in Virginia before 1821 actually embodied just 125 distinct lineages.

Once this second database was finished, the entries therein were cross-checked to the long-standard bibliographic references for early American newspapers, including those compiled by Clarence S. Brigham, Winifred Gregory, Delf Norona & Charles Shetler, and Lester J. Cappon. Any information found in those sources that was not seen in the original USNP record was added to the record developed here. This process generated a timeline for each journal's publication, the individuals known to have been a part of that production, and the evolutionary sequence of the sheet's title.

With that information in hand, a search for digitized copies of each title was conducted, drawing mostly on the *America's Historic Newspapers* archive maintained by Readex/Newsbank; some items, largely post-1820 variants of pre-1821 journals, were found in digitized collections that are part of the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), NEH's follow-on to the USNP, which includes the *Chronicling America* site of the Library of Congress and the *Virginia Chronicle* site of the Library of Virginia. These sources also allowed for a further search for comments about Virginia's newspapers and trades-people in non-Virginia journals, as well as for reprintings of items from issues of those papers now lost.

This online research, in combination with prior work done in surviving copies of many of the state's early newspapers, provided material for a workable narrative history for each title; that research also unearthed the names of previously unrecorded participants in the production of many journals, both as proprietors and editors. Remarkably, these complementary searches also uncovered titles that were not recorded in either the USNP records or the standard bibliographic references, thereby expanding the number of titles known to have issued in Virginia before 1821.

Then, as with the *Imprint Catalogue* above, the completed series of histories were organized by the date of initial publication in each issuing locale; so too were the accompanying bibliographic records for each title. Each newspaper history was assigned a "lineage title" based on the longest-lived or the most-recognizable version of that newspaper's published title. The text of the history is then preceded by a recapitulation of the title sequence presented in the bibliographic record. The narratives themselves run anywhere from two to sixteen pages in length, reflecting the amount of available evidence for each paper and the duration of its publication.