

The printer would then pull the handle called the dragon's tail or devil's tail. This lowered the platen and pressed the paper onto the inked form. After this was done the coffin would be slid out and the paper removed.

Once the paper was removed it was draped over clothes lines set up around the shop and left to dry. The lines were called flies and the printed papers became known as flyers.

Numb. XVII.  
THE  
New-York Weekly JOURNAL

*Containing the freshest Advices, Foreign, and Domestic.*

MONDAY February 25, 1733.

*Mr. Zenger's  
As Labelling seems at Present the Topick  
that is raised both at Court and a-  
mong the People, I must beg you will  
insert in your next Journal, the fol-  
lowing Sentiments of C. J. D. upon that  
Subject, and your Answer.*

*Your humble Servant, &c.*

A Libel is not the less a Libel, because  
it is not a Crime in Law, or in  
common Sense. There are some Truths  
not fit to be told; when, for Example,  
the Discovery of a small Fault may do  
mischief; or where the Discovery of a  
great Fault can do no Good, there ought  
to be no discovery at all, and to make  
Faults where there are none is still worse.

But this Doctrine only holds true as to  
private and personal failings; and it is  
quite otherwise when the Crimes of Men  
come to Affect the Publick. Nothing  
ought to be hid, or to be kept out of  
Country, and nothing ought to come in Competition  
with its Interests. Every crime against  
the publick, is a great crime, tho' there  
be some greater than others. Ignorance  
and Folly may be pleaded in Alleviation  
of private Offences; but when they come  
to be publick Offences, they lose all  
Benefit of such a Plea; we are then too  
near to consider, to what Causes they are  
owing, but what Evils they may produce,  
and how we shall readily find, that Folly  
has overturned States, and private Injuries  
been the parent of publick Confusion.

The exposing therefore of publick Wick-  
edness, as it is a Duty which every Man  
owes to Truth, and his Country, can ne-  
ver be a Libel in the Nature of Things;  
and they who call it so, make themselves

no Complement, he who is affronted at the  
reading of the Ten Commandments would  
make the Decalogue a Libel, if he durst,  
but he Tempts us at the same Time to form  
a Judgment of his Life and Morals, not  
at all to his Advantage: Whoever calls  
publick and necessary Truths Libels, does  
aspire to his own Character, and Arms  
us with Caution against his Designs.

I have long thought, that the World are  
very much mistaken in their Idea and  
Distinction of Libels, it has been heretofore  
generally understood, that there was no  
other Libels but those against Magistrates  
and those against private Men. Now to  
another seems to be a Third sort of Li-  
bels, full as destructive as any of the former;  
and probably so, I mean, Libels  
against the People. It was otherwise at  
Athens and Rome, where the particular  
Men, and even great Men, were often  
created with much Freedom and Severity,  
when they deserved it; yet the People,  
the body of the People, were spoken of  
with the utmost Respect and Reverence.  
*The Sacred Privilege of the People, the  
Inalienable Majesty of the People, the awful  
Authority of the People, and the inexorable  
Judgment of the People, were  
expressed Common in their wise, great and  
free Cities.*

Some will tell us, this is setting up the  
Mob, the Statesmen, and for the governors  
of States. The wicked Mob does not at all  
improve us in this Opinion, nor weaken  
the Ground I go upon, it is certain that  
the whole People, who are the publick,  
are the best Judges, whether Things go ill  
or well with this publick. It is true  
they can't all of them see distant Dangers,  
nor watch the Motion, nor guess the  
designs of neighbouring States: But every  
Coble

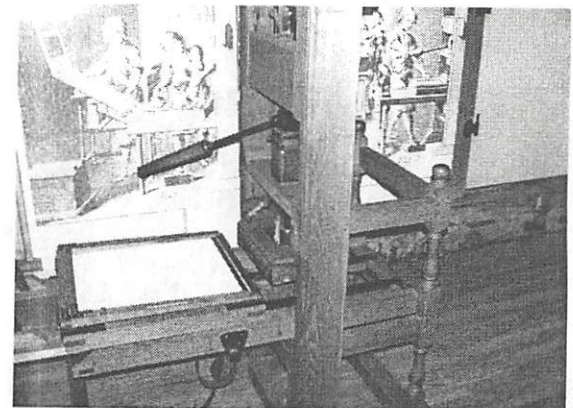
*John Peter Zenger used a common press to print this issue of the New-York Weekly Journal. His trial at the old City Hall on this site helped establish the right of freedom of the press.*

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# The Common Press

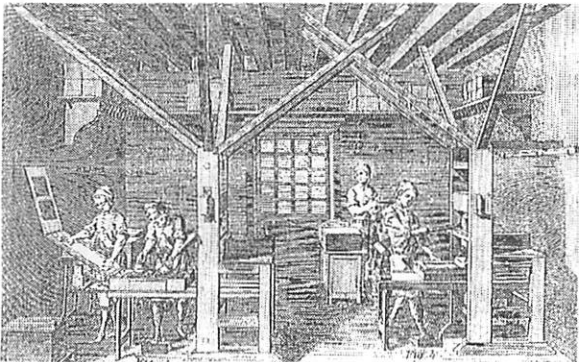


*The Common Press on display was built in 1949, based on designs of the 18th century.*

## The Common Press

The colonial printing press was available for the fight for freedom and independence thanks to inventor Johan Gutenberg. Gutenberg is credited with inventing a working press and moveable type about 1440.

Moveable type means that each letter of the alphabet is cast in an individual piece of metal that can be moved and reused. The first printing press known as a Common Press arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638.



*A typical 18<sup>th</sup> century print shop*

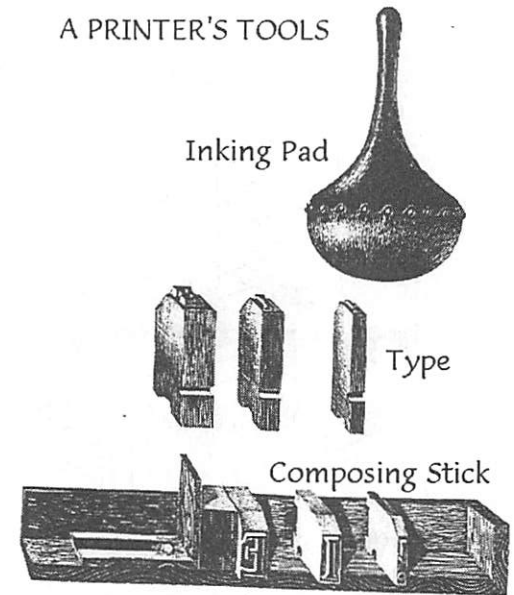
## How the Printer Worked

A colonial printer's type was made up of large numbers of single metal letters of the alphabet that could be put together to form words, sentences and paragraphs. These were then combined into pages.

Type was kept in a specially made shallow tray called a case that was divided into many sections. Each letter had its own section. The upper sections contained all the capital letters and the smaller letters were in the lower sections. Today capital letters are referred to as upper case, while the small letters are called lower case because of their location in the case. Printers called individual letters sorts. When they ran out of letters, they became angry and were said "to be out of sorts".

Once the type was separated it was the job of the compositor to put the letters into sentences, which were then united to make a page. He used a composing stick to place the letters chosen. The letters had to be placed in the stick upside down and backwards. Once this was done, the letters were placed in a metal pan called a galley. A galley proof was used to correct any mistakes.

## A PRINTER'S TOOLS



After corrections were made, the set type was placed into a metal frame or chase and locked into place. The pages locked into the chase were called forms and were placed into the coffin. Using two leather balls, the printer then inked the type.

A sheet of paper was then placed on the tympan and the frisket was folded over it to hold the paper in place. The frisket and tympan were again folded over and the paper now rested over the inked form in the coffin. Using the rounce handle, the coffin was slid under the platen.