

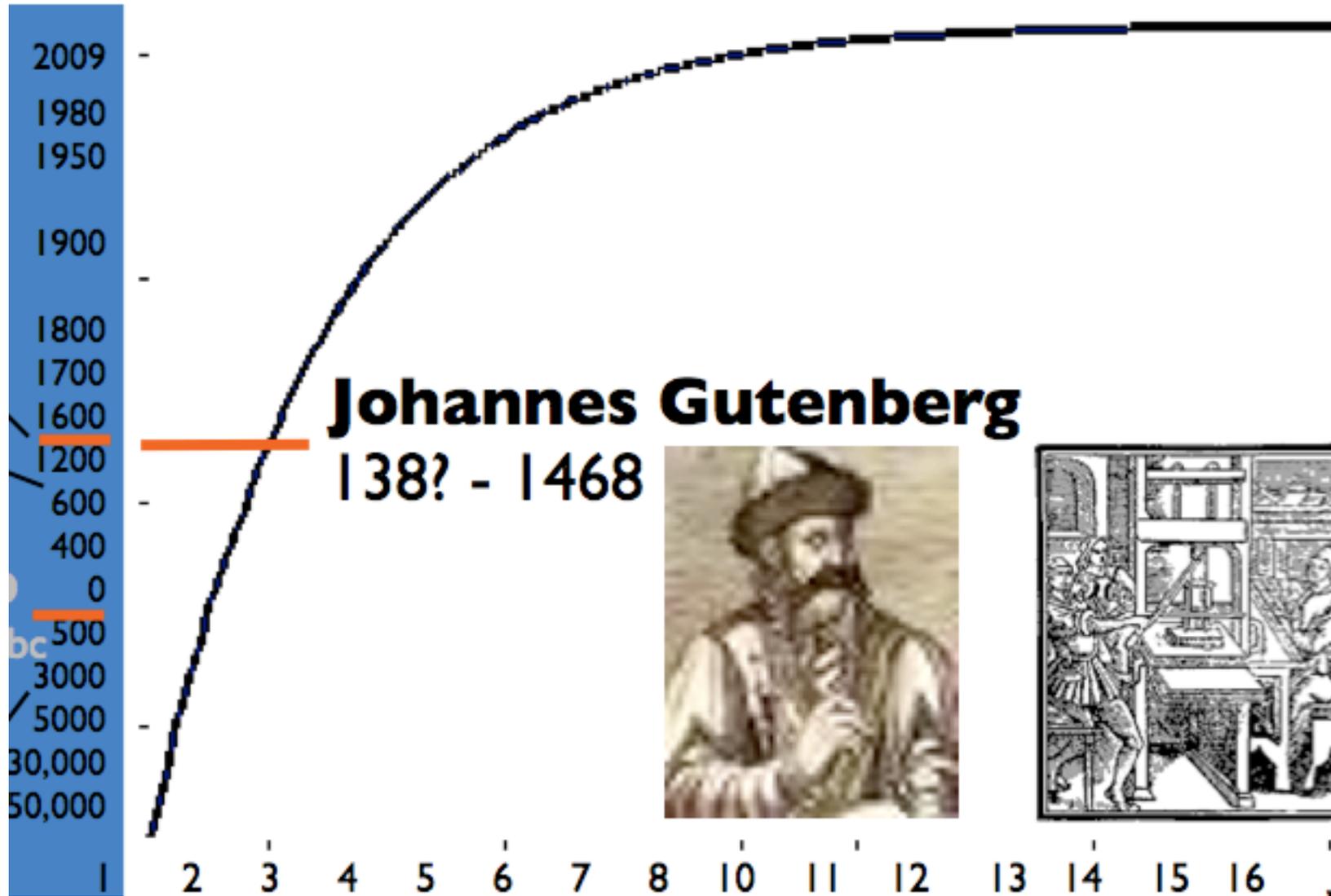
# HISTORY OF INFORMATION THE RISE OF THE PUBLIC

Lecture 4 – July 13, 2009 – Megan Finn

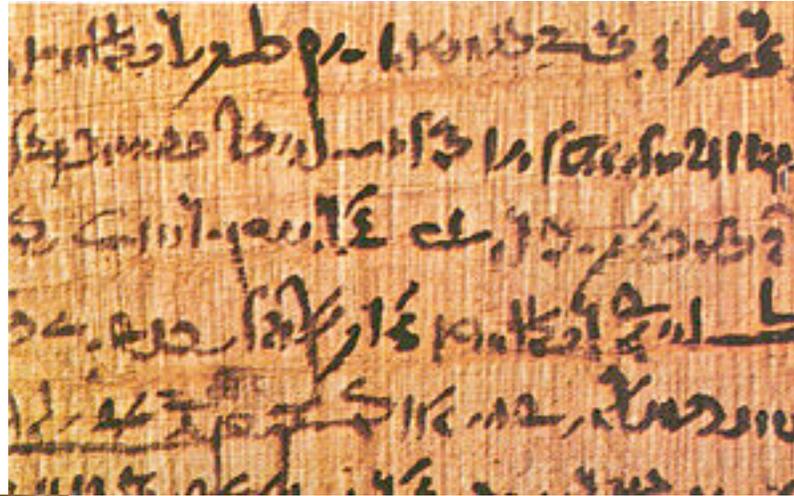
# Last time



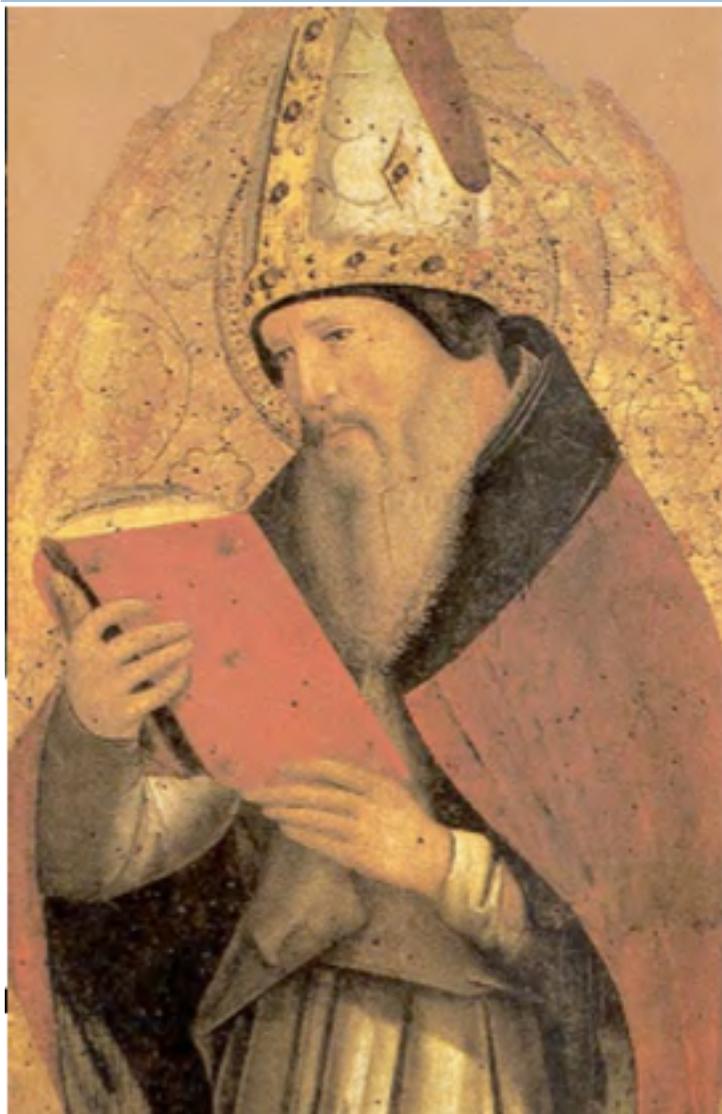
- Summary of last time
  - Scribal culture
  - Gutenberg, the man
  - Early printed works
- Eisenstein's arguments
  - China and Korea



# Scribal Culture: Papyrus and Scrolls

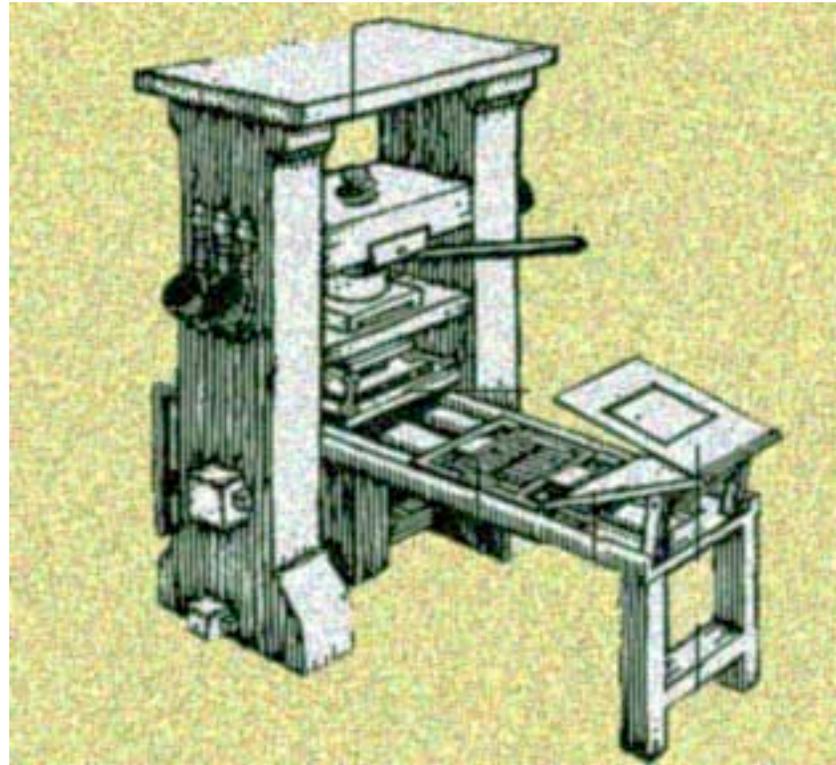


# Scribal Culture: Parchment and Codex





# Gutenberg and the Printing Press



# ... the effects of print

- "... increased output
- "... standardization
- "... rationalizing, codifying, cataloguing
- "... from corrupted to improved
- "... fixity and cumulative change
- "... amplification and reinforcement"

■ Reformation

■ Renaissance

■ Scientific Revolution

# Is Eisenstein a determinist?



# A revolution 300 years in the making...







# Making sense of variation



- Park's [adapted] 6 perspectives
  - Alphabet/logograph
  - Xylography/movable type
  - Material: metal/wood (technical details)
  - Formal/vernacular
  - Funding: government/private capital
  - Politics of printing history

# The moral....



- Need to look beyond the classic “Gutenberg’s printing press” narrative to make sense of the so-called “print revolution”
  - ▣ Technology + institutions = change
- Chartier’s “dominant obsessions” about print culture
  - ▣ Concern over loss
  - ▣ Corruption
  - ▣ Excess

# An abbreviated timeline

- 5<sup>th</sup> c. bce -> Greece is an alphabetic society
- 2<sup>nd</sup> c. ad -> Chinese using paper
- 5<sup>th</sup> c. ad -> codex begins to dominate in Europe
- 8<sup>th</sup> c -> China has printing
- 868 -> Diamond Sutra printed in China (first known printed book)
- 9<sup>th</sup> c. -> first universities in Europe
- ~1086 -> Domesday land survey published in England
- 1377 -> Jikji published in Korea (first known movable type book)
- 1455 -> Gutenberg publishes the 42-line bible
- 1492 -> Trithemius writes *In praise of Scribes*
- ...
- 1662 -> Royal Society for the Advancement of Knowledge founded
- 1702 -> “First” Newspaper: *Daily Courant*

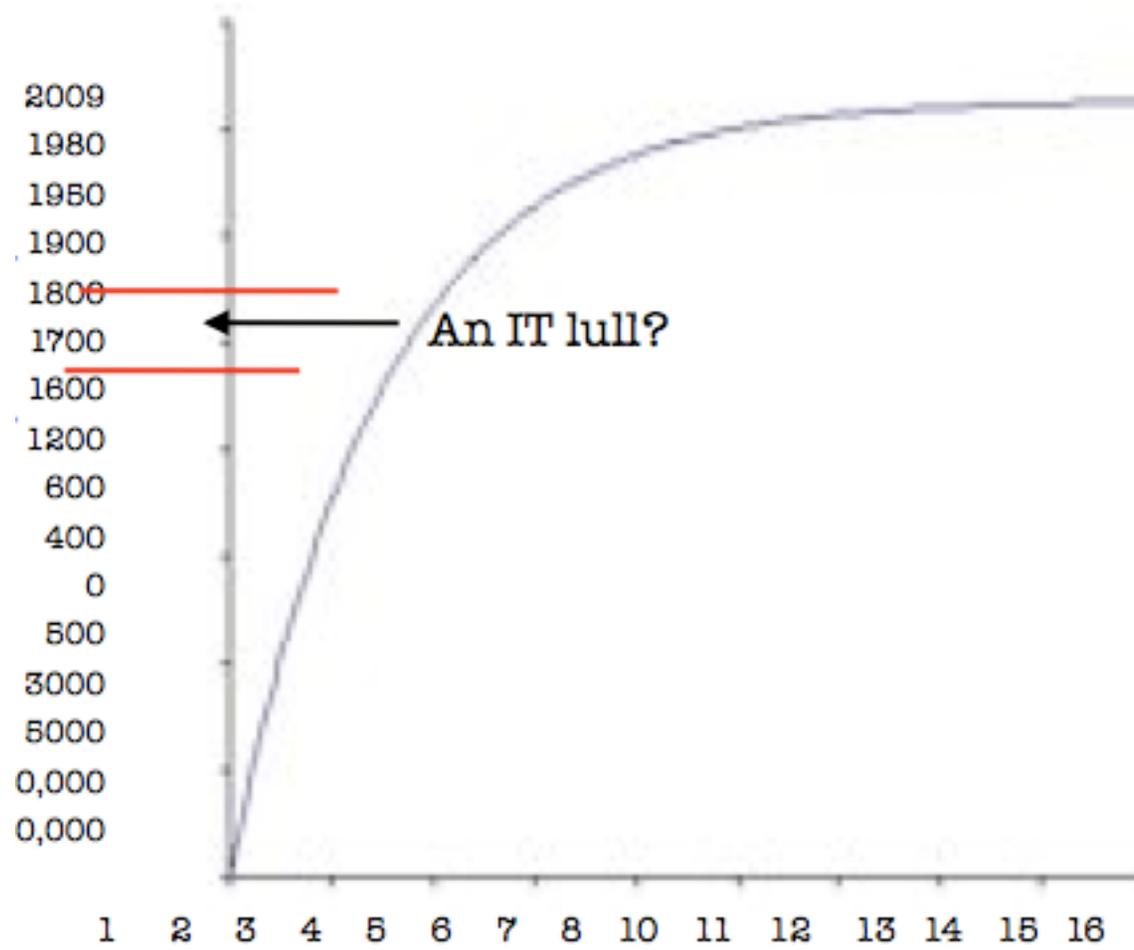
# Some dates

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- **A LONG TIME!**
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# Agenda



- the public
- quiz
- England in turmoil
- The coffeehouses and the virtuosi
- An informational look at France
- The Royal Society



# What is “the public”?

Occurrences in major newspapers, 2005:

*American people 2660*

*American public 1350 (1:2)*

*Iraqi people 940*

*Iraqi public 37 (1:25)!*

# What is “the public sphere”?



- Jürgen Habermas:
  - Where public opinion is formed
  - Outside of political and religious realm
- But who is really included?

# What is the public?

- “We use it in the sense of audience, as in speaking of the public for a book, a concert, a play, or an art exhibition. Reading public, music public, theater public – such usages began to appear in the seventeenth century and had become common by the eighteenth. Unlike earlier meanings, these were unrelated to the exercise of state authority. **They referred rather to publics whose members were private individuals rendering judgment on what they read, observed, or otherwise experienced.** A burgeoning print culture provided one medium through which these publics made their opinions known; new or expanding arenas of sociability like coffeehouses, salons, and masonic lodges were another.”
  - James Van Horn Melton “The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe”

# The Emergence of the Public

- "[In the late seventeenth century] . . . a new cultural space developed, ... a 'public sphere' in which private individuals came together to form a whole greater than the sum of the parts. By exchanging information, ideas, and criticism, these individuals created a cultural actor -- the public -- which has dominated European culture ever since. Many, if not most, of the cultural phenomena of the modern world derive from [this period] -- the periodical, the newspaper, the novel, the journalist, the critic, the public library, the concert, the public museum... Perhaps most important of all, it was then that 'public opinion' came to be recognized as the ultimate arbiter in matters of taste and politics.
  - Tim Blanning, *The Culture of Power*

# Quiz



- How did coffeehouses support the rise of “the public”?



# Setting the scene

England is in turmoil

# England – in turmoil

- revolution leading to the execution of the king in 1649



# England – in turmoil

- revolution leading to the execution of the king in 1649
- 1660 the king's son is brought back





# England – in turmoil

- revolution leading to the execution of the king in 1649
- 1660 the king's son is brought back
- 1665 plague
- 1666 fire



# England – in turmoil



- revolution leading to the execution of the king in 1649
- 1660 the king's son is brought back
- 1665 plague
- 1666 fire
- More connected to the rest of the world



# Coffeehouses, virtuosi, print

# The coffeehouses



- New places of socialization
- Experimentation with new social orders
- Places of knowledge exchange
- But also places to learn about what is going on in the world

# Growing numbers of book titles



- Number of titles printed in England: (from Wm. St. Clair, *Reading Nation*)
  - 1630s -600
  - 1640s -1,600
  - 1650s -1,200
  - 1660s -800
  - 1670s -1,000
  - 1680s -1,500
  - 1690s -1,400



# Virtuosi

- Who is it?
- What do they do?



Robert Boyle  
1627–1691

# The Kunstkammer (Cabinet of Curiosities)



Natural History Cabinet, Naples, 1599

# The virtuosi: values

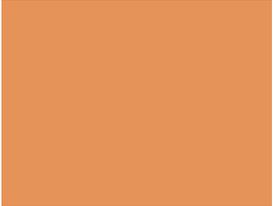
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- "Though the Society entertains very many men of particular Professions; yet the farr greater Number are Gentlemen, free, and unconfin'd."
- ▣ Sprat, Thomas. 1667 *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* London.

# The virtuosi: values

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- "...when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances."
  - David Hume, 1757!



## A multi media system: Paris

and “how societies made sense of events and transmitted information about them”

-*Darnton, Robert. 2000. "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris."*

# Darnton traces news



- 1. insider gossip at court;
- 2. general rumor in Paris;
- 3. incorporated into nouvelles;
- 4. printed as a scandalous book.

# A multi-media system?



- "It makes no sense, I think, to separate printed from oral and written modes of communication, as we casually do when we speak of "print culture," because they were all bound together in a multi-media system."
  - Darnton

# How does the news reach the public?



- There is no purpose “to derive one mode of communication from another,.... It was the spread of the message that mattered – not its origin but its amplification, the way it reached the public and ultimately took hold”
  - Darnton

# An “information system”



- Coffeehouse
- Penny university
- News
- Virtuosi
- Cabinets of Wonder

# The Royal Society



Robert Boyle

# History of the Royal Society of London



# Sprat's History



- the "philosophy of mankind"
  - "Members ... different Religions, Countries, and Professions ... not to lay the Foundation of an English, Scotch, Irish, Popish, or Protestant Philosophy; but a Philosophy of Mankind."

# "advancement of *real knowledge*"



- uses the idea of "experiment" and "trials" making a case for ideas
- argues against conspiracy theories, taking things as a sign everything becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. What are "reasonable acts" of nature?
- argues against alchemy, using science to try to make yourself rich because this leads to greed, betrayal and secrecy.

# Building a movement



- The society will make good work visible and inventors will be given honor.
- Establishing expertise with publishing.
  - ▣ “Their purpose is, in short, to make faithful Records, of all the Works of Nature, or Art, which can come within their reach: that so the present Age, and posterity, may be able to put a mark on the Errors, which have been strengthened by long prescription: to restore the Truths, that have lain neglected”

# New practices



- “to separate the knowledge of Nature, from the colours of Rhetorick, the devices of Fancy, or the delightful deceit of Fables”
  - ▣ Sprat, Thomas. 1667 *The History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* London.
- "reliable truth-generating practices were put in place and institutionalized"
  - ▣ Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, 1994