

# THE WRITTEN WORD - THE TOOLS AND THE TRADE

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## The written word – the tools and the trade

An exploration of how writing equipment has developed and how an industry has arisen out of the written word.

The equipment we use to write with today has its early beginnings in cave man's first early tools. Then came the progression to writing with the stylus on moist clay. However, it was the invention of ink that advanced writing beyond chiselling, and the introduction of paper paralleled it. This was superseded by the quill pen and later the metal nib and eventually the fountain pen. And of course we mustn't forget the pencil still in daily use today. As manufacturing developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the invention of a machine with which to write was inevitable and today computers have become the main tool with which people write.

Through a combination of stamps, postal stationery and illustrated covers this display explains how this need for something to write with has been satisfied over time from stone tools to the computer, and how manufacturing and commercialism have come to play a part in this development.

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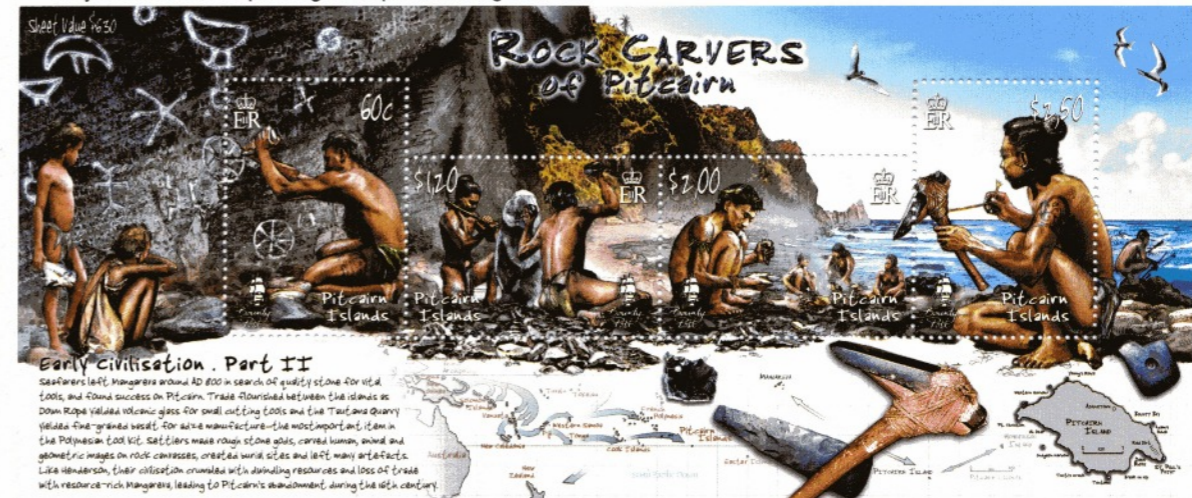
3. The Effects of Technology



Tristan da Cunha 2004 "History of Writing" Miniature Sheet Showing ancient writings and modern technology

## 1.1. Early Writing Tools (without pigment)

One of cave man's first inventions was the sharpened stone which he adapted into the first writing instrument. He scratched pictures with the stone tool onto the walls of his cave dwelling. The cave drawings represented events in daily life such as the planting of crops or hunting victories.



Rock Carvers of Pitcairn – Early Civilization Part 2 - 2007 Pitcairn Island Miniature sheet with 4 values

Polynesian seafarers came to Pitcairn around AD 800 in search of quality stone for vital tools, and found success on Pitcairn. The volcanic glass had flakes that could serve as sharp tools suitable for writing and the local fine grained basalt was suited to making adzes. Settlers carved human, animal and geometric images on rock canvasses.



1925 issue for the International Geographic Congress in Cairo showing Thoth, scribe to the Gods, carving the name of King Faud



France honours Champollion in 1972

The Rosetta Stone was discovered in Egypt and dates back to 196 BC. It is a basalt slab inscribed with three languages on it (Greek, demotic and hieroglyphs) each saying the same thing. Because the words are translated into the other languages, it provided Jean-Francois Champollion the key to the mystery of Egyptian hieroglyphs.



Stamp showing the writing stylus

The earliest means of writing that approached how we write today employed a writing stylus, made of metal, bone or ivory in order to place marks upon wax-coated tablets.



## 1.2. Early Writing Tools (with pigment)



Pigment block used on cave paintings.  
Tristan da Cunha 2004 History of Writing



Cave paintings at Lascaux  
France 1968 French Art

Various cultures used their hands and fingers to apply natural dyes and colours derived from plants, blood, minerals.



Egyptian writing palette containing reed pens  
Tristan da Cunha 2004 History of Writing



Two types of jointed bamboo used for reed pens.  
China (Taiwan) 1993



The Egyptians used brushes and reed pens for writing with pictures on papyrus scrolls. The Romans created a reed pen, perfect for parchment and ink, from the hollow tubular stems from jointed bamboo plants. They converted these stems into a primitive form of fountain pen. They cut the end into the form of a pen nib or point. The stem was then filled with a writing fluid which was forced to the nib by squeezing.



Writing brush in use  
Korea 2005 Miniature Sheet



Various Chinese writing brushes  
China 200 History of Writing Equipment



In Chinese Calligraphy the writing brush was an important item. Writing brushes can be soft or stiff or a combination of both, The softness of the brush means the strokes can be light or heavy. In Chinese legend the writing brush was invented by Meng Dion in the 300 B.C., but evidence suggests that it has been in existence for at least 6,000 years.

## 1.3 The Ink



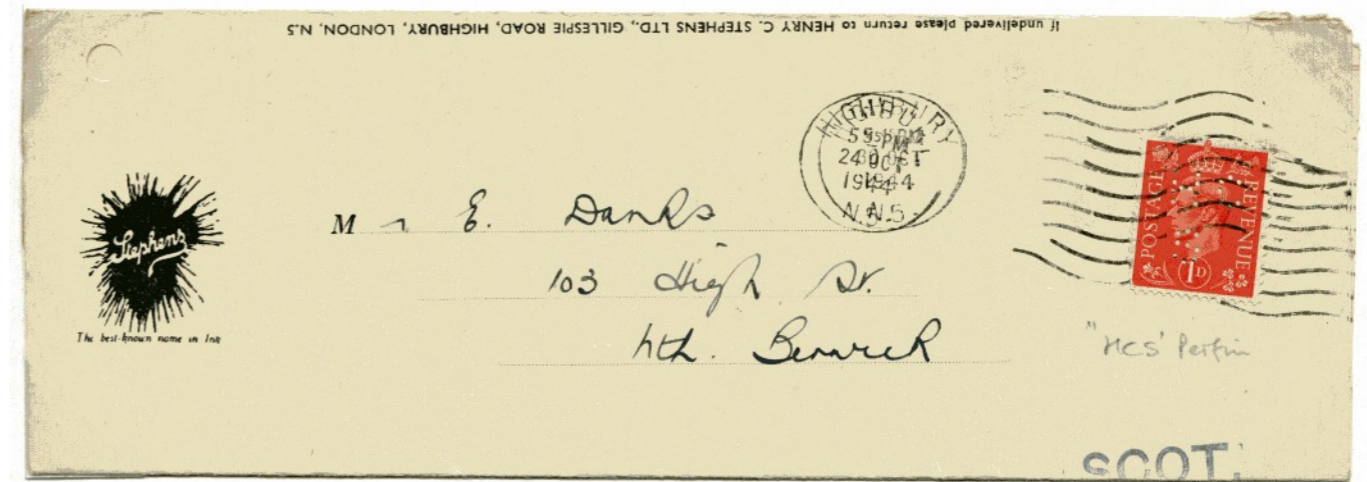
Ink stick and Ink stone. China 2000. Traditional writing equipment



An old Chinese ink stick. China 2006

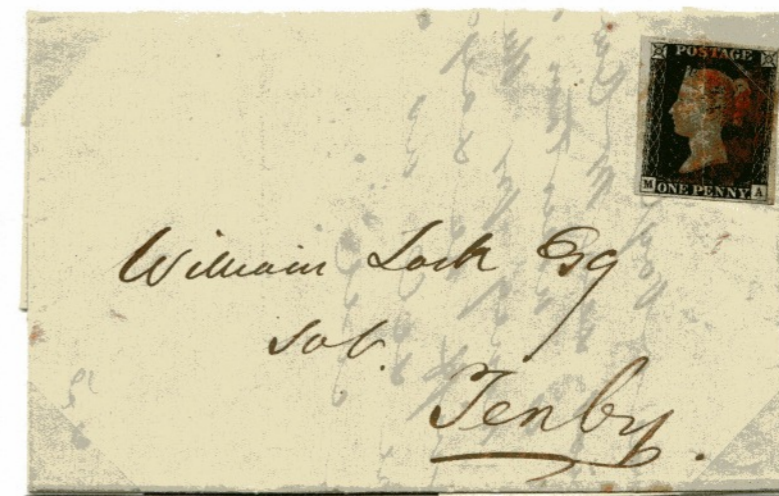


The Chinese invented and perfected "Indian Ink". Originally designed for blacking the surfaces of raised stone-carved hieroglyphics, the ink was a mixture of soot and animal glue. To make ink from the ink stick, it has to be continuously ground against an ink stone with a small quantity of water to produce a dark liquid which is then applied with a brush.



Tuck in invoice from Henry C. Stevens Ltd Proprietors of Stevens Inks. Postmarked Highbury 1944.  
George VI 1d stamp with HCS Perfin

Henry "Inky" Stevens (1796-1864) was the inventor of the famous blue-black inks – the first dye inks ever made. Due to its indelible properties the government made it mandatory writing fluid for legal documents, registers and ship's logs.



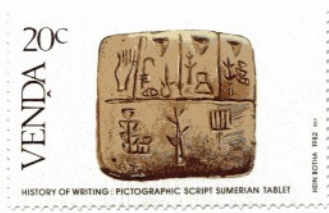
Penny Black on entire sent to Tenby postmarked Pembroke 12<sup>th</sup> January 1841.

Demand for ink increased sharply when more people started to write letters following the introduction of the Universal Penny Post in 1837 and the Penny Black stamp in 1840. By the 1850's 360 million letters a year were being sent.



## 1.4 The Writing Surface

There has been a need to record things since the dawn of civilisation - for records, laws, payments, history, religious testaments and literature.



1982 Pictographic script on a Sumerian tablet



1978 A letter written on Birch bark



2008 A Papyrus scroll

In the early days, mankind used what came most readily to hand, including tablets of stone or clay, scrolls of papyrus made from plant pith, and parchment made from animal skins.



Stamps from Jordan and Israel showing the Dead Sea Scrolls and the jars that held them.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were mainly made of animal skins, but also papyrus and one of copper. They were written with a carbon-based ink, and were most likely written between 200 B.C. and 68 A.D.



1980. The 17<sup>th</sup> century poems of Rabbi Shalem Shbazi, the greatest of Israel's poets, were written on paper.

The invention of paper superseded all the previous writing surfaces. Light and pliable, it proved the ideal material for writing on, and later for printing on. Paper is considered one of the four great inventions of Chinese civilisation. Wood fibre paper was invented in China in 105 A.D. Paper was not widely used until paper mills were built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



1991. 500th anniversary of Polish paper industry. The stamp depicts a vatman and a vat of paper pulp. He is dipping a paper mold into the vat to begin making a sheet of paper. Sheets of paper hung to dry are visible in the background to the left, and a paper press is to the right.



## 1.5 The Quill

The writing instrument that dominated for the longest period in history (over 1000 years) was the quill pen. Introduced around 600 A.D., the quill is a pen made from a bird feather. The strongest quills were those taken from living birds in the Spring from the five outer left wing feathers.



Goose quill pen, a Swan, Eagle, Hawk and Owl.

Goose feathers were the most commonly used for quills. Swan feathers were of a premium grade being scarcer and more expensive. For make fine lines, crow feathers were the best, then came the feathers of the eagle, owl and hawk



Charles Dickens is portrayed with a Quill Turks and Caicos Islands and Dubai



Descartes' most famous work was remembered incorrectly by the stamp's French designer. "Discours sur la Methode" should have read "Discourse de la Methode". The used stamp shows the correction issued soon afterwards.



Famous writers of a previous age are often portrayed on stamps with a quill pen.



Signing of the American Constitution 17<sup>th</sup> September 1787. 1987 USA stamp and postcard issued for the bi-centenary. The quill pen is often featured on stamps for the signing of important historical documents of the past.



## 1.6 The Metal Nib

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century metal nibs replaced quill pens due to the problem that quills needed replacing after a week's use and also involved lengthy preparation time. The nibs were mounted onto a holder often made of wood.



Various nibs portayed on stamps

Argentina \$0.75 Aerogramme showing various nibs  
The change from quills to nibs began around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when craftsmen in Britain and America were producing to order different types of nibs in various metals.



1935/6? (Had the date mark been changed?) Advertising envelope sent from the Waverley Pen company to Lahore with various redirection postal markings on the reverse for Lahore, Delhi and Bombay. 1912 6d George V stamp

The Waverley pen was first manufactured in 1864 by the MacNiven company. Nesbit MacNiven had started as a papermaker in 1770. The company produced nibs in Birmingham until the 1960's. The major customers in the last years were in India, where there were large numbers of people who were unable to afford more modern writing equipment. Production finished in 1964 exactly 100 years since the Waverley nib was first made.

## 1.7 The Fountain Pen



2002 Stamp Day, Belgium 1983 GB stamp booklet with 10 16p Machins

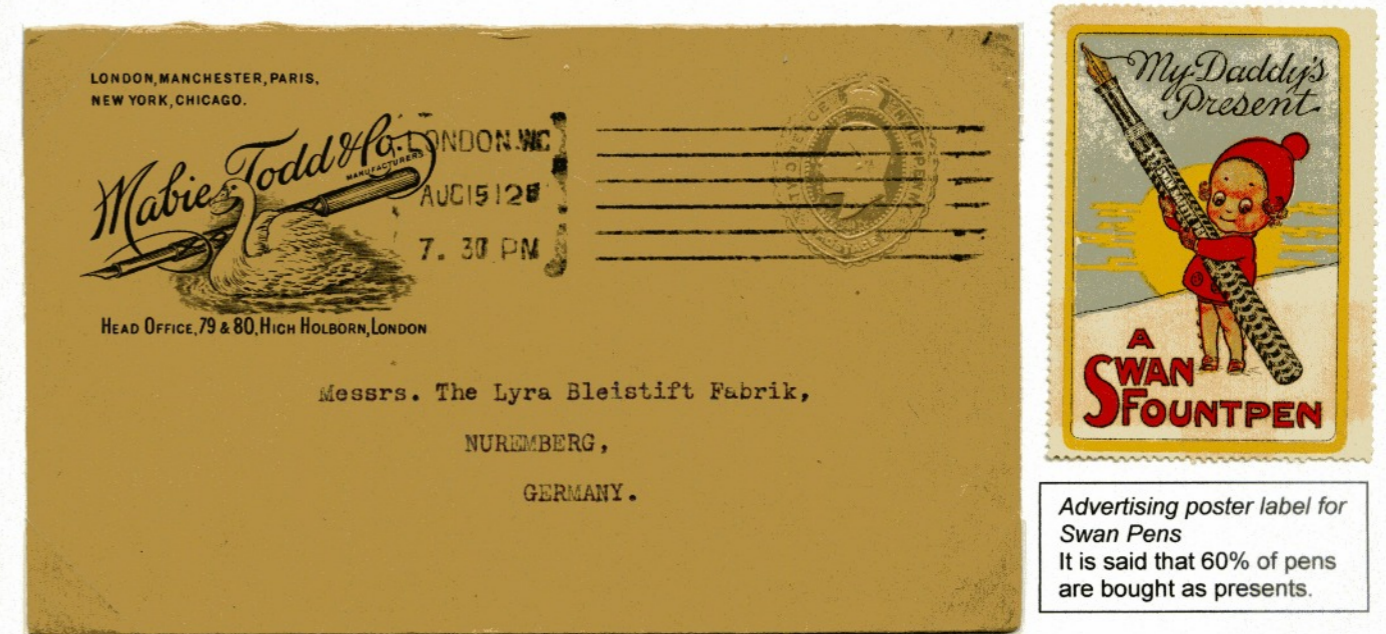
Writing gradually changed with connecting letters rather than printed letters and having more of a slant. New writing instruments were called for, and this led to the development of the fountain pen.



The Treaty of Versailles was signed using a solid gold Waterman pen.

1915 Censored cover sent from Waterman's, London to The Hague with 2 ½ d postage (on the 2d displayed)

The first self-filling fountain pen was patented in 1831 but early models were plagued by ink spills and other failures. The first practical fountain pen was patented by Lewis Waterman, an American, in 1884 after a new fountain pen he had bought to sign an important contract leaked onto the document and refused to write.



1912 Mabie Todd Advertising Cover sent from New York to Nuremberg with embossed 2½ d George STO stamp

Mabie Todd was one of the longest-lived makers of writing equipment dating back to the 1840's in America producing gold nibs and pencils. Their first fountain pen, the Calligraphic, was introduced around 1878. Production of the "Swan" fountain pens appears to have begun by 1890, some of which were amongst the most ornate pens of their era. The fountain pen was a novelty, but the reliability of the Swan pen proved it to be a significant invention. A London office was opened in 1884 and the manufacture of pens in Britain appears to have begun around 1909.

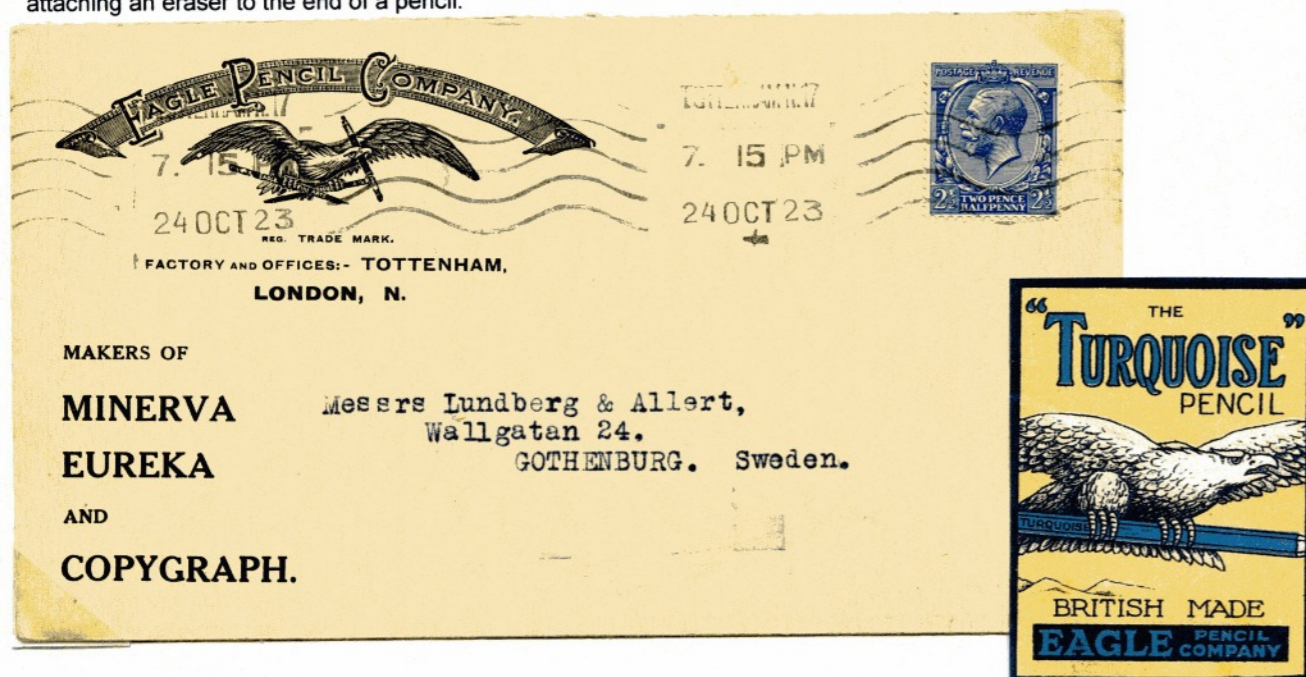


## 1.8 The Lead Pencil

Lead pencils do not actually contain lead, but graphite, a form of carbon. A process used to make pencils was developed and patented in 1795 in France. A mixture of clay and graphite was fired and then put into a wooden case. The method allowed pencils to be made to any hardness or softness, important to artists, draftsmen and writers.



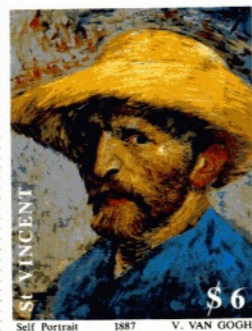
Advertising Cover for the Eberhard Faber Pencil Company with New York Meter Mark. In 1861, Eberhard Faber built the first pencil factory in the United States. In 1858 the first patent was received for attaching an eraser to the end of a pencil.



1923 Illustrated advertising cover for the Eagle Pencil Company, London sent to Sweden with 1912 2 1/2 d stamp and "Turquoise" Pencil label on reverse. This pencil was produced especially for drawing and drafting. The Eagle Pencil Company was founded by Daniel Berolzheimer in 1856 opening a pencil shop in New York. In 1894 its London office warehouse and showrooms opened. The Tottenham pencil making factory started operating in 1907.

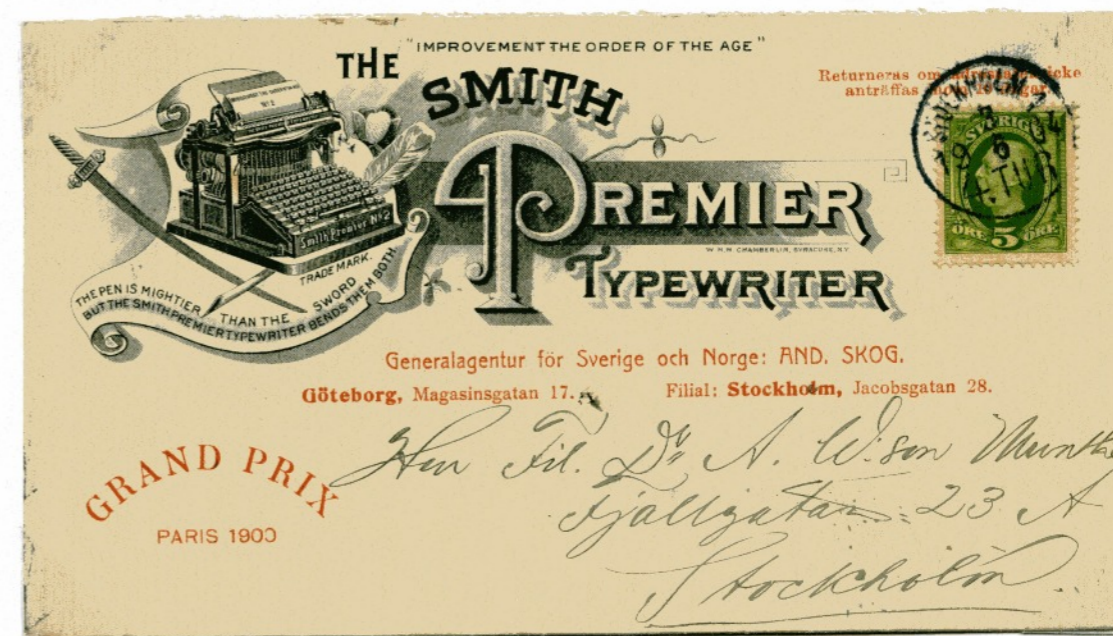


1979, John Steinbeck. Literary Arts Festival John Steinbeck was an obsessive pencil user and is said to have used as many as 60 in a day. His novel "East of Eden" is said to have used more than 300 pencils to write. Van Gogh only used Faber pencils as he felt that were superior, "a capital black and most agreeable".



1990. Death centenary of van Gogh

## 1.9 The Machine for Writing – the Typewriter



1904 Advertising Cover for the Smith Premier Typewriter with Stockholm postmark and 5 ore stamp

The Smith Premier full-keyboard upstroke typewriter is one of the giants of typewriter history. It was first produced in 1889 and the inventor was Alexander Brown an engineer employed by Smith. Brown developed a system of cranks and rods that could be fine tuned to make the operation light. Another feature was a circular brush to clean the type. By 1904, the brand name had been bought out by The Remington Typewriter Company.



1924 Two shilling book of stamps with advertisement for the Remington Home Portable Typewriter

The first commercial typewriter was actually produced in 1873 by Remington. Their first typewriters had features that are still in use today – the QWERTY layout on the keyboard, and a shift key. By 1924, the year of the advertisement, portable typewriters were available and by then front striking typewriters had overtaken the previous upstroke models.



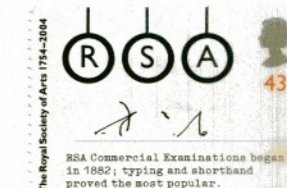
Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) 1940. US Writers



Rudyard Kipling 2002 Centenary of "Just So"



Daphne du Maurier 1996 GB Famous Women



RSA as typewriter keys 2004 GB Royal Society of Arts

One of the earliest users of a Remington typewriter was Mark Twain. He was possibly the first writer to send his publisher a typewritten script. Both Agatha Christie and Margaret Mitchell used the Remington Portable and Rudyard Kipling used the Remington Noiseless model in his later years. One writer, Daphne du Maurier, has been featured on a stamp with a typewriter.



## 1.9 The Machine for Writing – the Word Processor

Word processing evolved from the needs of writers rather than those of mathematicians, only later merging with the computer field. The history of word processing is the story of the gradual automation of the physical aspects of writing and editing, and the refinement of the technology to make it available to individual and corporate users.



Flat plate print Perf 11. Rotary Press Perf 11x10 1/2. Rotary Coil Perf 10 Vertical.

1929 and 1947 US stamps celebrating the life of Thomas Edison who invented the first electric typewriter.

Thomas Edison patented an electric typewriter in 1872, but the first workable model was not introduced until the 1920s. In the 1930s IBM introduced a more refined version which increased typing speeds and quickly gained wide acceptance in the business community. This was soon followed by the introduction of the automatic or repetitive typewriter, perhaps the greatest step from the typewriter towards modern word processing.



1982 Information Technology postmark on Development of Communications and Modern Technological Aids issue

Information technology has played an important role in man's need to record and communicate.



Satellite and personal computer      The Millenium Bug      Computers in the Workplace

Aspects of computers and information technology have become a popular feature on stamps.

Word processing is now one of the most common general applications for personal computers. New features have been introduced over the years - spelling check, mailing list programs, working on more than one document at a time on the same screen, bookkeeping and inventory functions, combining word processing with data processing and completing the marriage of the word processor to the computer.

## 2.1 The Paper Trade



1994 set of five stamps from Taiwan depicting early papermakers at their trade using bamboo as their raw material. The stamps show the cutting and cooking of the bamboo, the moulding of the pulp in wooden panels, the stacking of the wet paper for pressing and the drying process.

Paper is considered one of the great inventions of Chinese civilisation. Papermaking was first documented in 105 AD though archeological discoveries suggest it was used as early as 160 BC. The Chinese held the monopoly on making paper for 500 years.

American Papermaking  
1690-1990  
Rittenhouse paper mill  
circa 1770.



PENNSYLVANIA  
This watermark appears  
on the first paper  
made in the United States  
on this site in 1690.

© USPS 1990



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE



**Rittenhouse Paper Mill**  
Birthplace of American papermaking.

In 1990 the USPS issued a postal card honouring 300 years of papermaking in the United States. The stamp pictures Rittenhouse's third mill after the previous two were destroyed by flood and fire.

In the USA, papermaking began in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first mill there was built by William Rittenhouse in 1690. The earliest certain evidence of a water-powered paper mill dates to 1282 in Spain; the first mill in England was set up in 1490 but the first commercially successful paper mill in Britain did not occur before 1588.

Before the industrialisation of paper production from wood pulp, the most common fibre source was recycled fibres from used textiles, called rags. Although cheaper than vellum, paper remained expensive, at least in book-sized quantities, through the centuries, until the advent of steam-driven paper making machines in the 19th century. By the end of the 19th-century almost all printers in the western world were using wood in lieu of rags to make paper

1952 20c stamp from Canada showing a symbolic representation of rolls of paper being made out of trees



1956 Canada celebrates its pulp and paper industry with this 20c stamp showing the modern manufacture of paper in continuous rolls.

Economical printing and the rising popularity of newspapers and postage increased the demand for paper and this encouraged manufacturers to find ways of automating its production. The first machine for producing paper in a continuous roll was patented in France in 1798. This machine led to the development of the steam driven rotary press and remained the prototype for mechanised production until modern times.



## 2.2 The Printing Trade



1976 GB 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of British printing. The 13p stamp shows an early printing press. William Caxton was an English merchant, diplomat, writer, and printer. He is thought to be the first English person to work as a printer and the first to introduce a printing press into England, which he did in 1476. He was also the first English retailer of printed books.



1938 US stamps commemorating the 300th anniversary of the first printing press in Colonial America

Stephen Daye was a printer in England who emigrated to the Massachusetts Colony in 1639 and set up a printing press at Harvard College. There is some debate amongst scholars as to the first printed document in America, but most agree that it was either a broadsheet (similar to a newspaper page) or an Almanac. A year later, the first actual book was published in America, on the same press.



1993 Guernsey stamps showing the various aspects of Thomas de la Rue's career in the printing trade. Thomas de la Rue, who moved to London in 1821, set up in business as a stationer and printer. In 1831 they secured the business a Royal Warrant to produce playing cards, in 1855 postage stamps and in 1860 banknotes.

## 2.3 The Printing Processes



1843 stampless cover from Swinford Brothers, Lithographers in London, showing a red handstruck 1d to Redruth then redirected to Falmouth. Inside shows an engraved advertisement in black.

There are various different types of printing process. Lithography is a process that is different from other traditional methods, mainly because it doesn't require the print-maker to first etch the image onto metal plates.



2005 Isle of Man. Harry Potter books.

Offset printing is a widely used printing technique. Currently, most books and newspapers are printed using the technique of offset lithography.

Gravure printing is a technique used for long high-quality print runs, where the image being printed is made up of small depressions in the surface of the printing plate. This method is used for magazines and also postage stamps.

1990 Brazil stamp for Stamp World London 90. 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1840 Penny Black showing the Penny Black and the 1843 Brazil "Bull's Eye".

The Penny Black, along with five other stamps released over the following 30 years, were all printed using intaglio or line-engraving. This method has its roots in the old printing methods of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



150 ANOS DO PENNY BLACK



## 2.4 The Stationery Trade

Originally the term stationery referred to all products sold by a stationer, whose name indicated that his book shop was on a fixed spot, usually near a university, and permanent, while medieval trading was carried out by itinerant peddlers.

1854 cover with a 1d pink embossed stamp  
from Parkins & Gotto stationers



**PARKINS & GOTTO'S**  
**British Stationery Warehouse,**  
25, OXFORD STREET.  
P. & G's. new Writing Paper, made from STRAW, 3s. the Ream.  
NO CHARGE for STAMPING—A single packet of Note Paper or 100 Envelopes stamped with arms  
Crests or Initials, free of charge and every description of Stationery, full 30 per cent. cheaper than any  
other house, at PARKINS & GOTTO'S, Paper & Envelope Makers, 25, Oxford Street. Useful Cream  
Laid Note Paper, full size 6 quires for 6d. superior Thick do. 4 quires for 1s. India Note, 5 quires for  
1s. Letter Paper, 4s. per ream. Sermon Paper, 4s. 6d. Outdies for Scribbling, 4s. per ream. Good  
Cream Laid Cemented Envelopes, 4d. per 100. the Queen's Head Envelopes, 1s. per doz. Office  
Envelopes, 5c. per 1000 BLACK-BORDERED CREAM-LAID NOTE PAPER, (full size) five  
quires for 1s. Bordered Envelopes, 9d. per 100. Best Wax, 3s. 6d. per lb. 100 Super  
Visiting Cards, printed for 1s. 6d. Useful Sample Packets of Paper, and En-  
velopes, by post, 1s. each. List of Prices sent post free. On Orders over  
10s. CARRIAGE PAID to any part of the Country.  
Trade Supplied—Copy the address,  
**PARKINS & GOTTO,**  
25, Oxford Street.  
Manufacturers.



1d pink embossed stamp  
with purple collar and  
1900 squared circle  
postmark. The Parkins  
and Gotto advertising  
ring was added by the  
company after the  
envelope was stamped,

Stationery is intrinsically linked to paper and the process of written, personalized communication. Parkins and Gotto were renowned London stationers and inside the cover is an advertisement for notepaper, envelopes, visiting cards and mourning stationery.

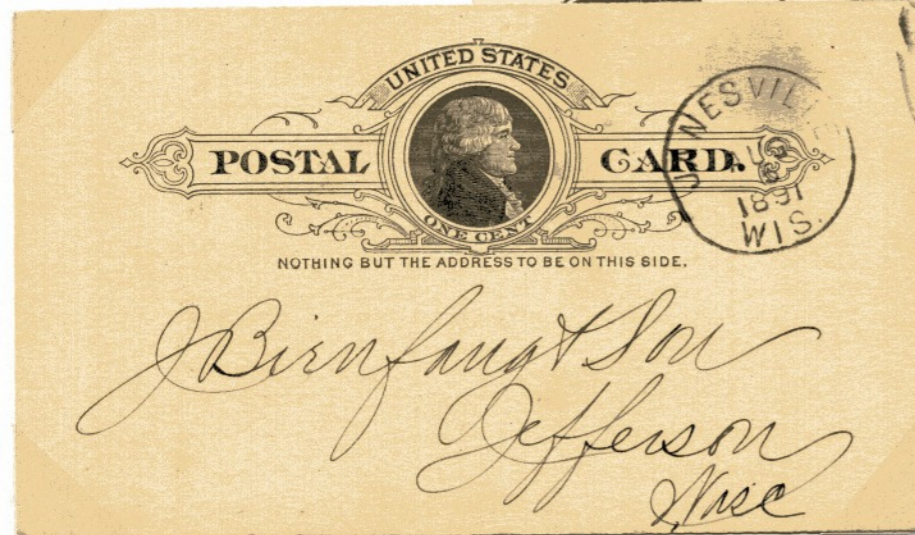
**CLEAR THE TRACK**  
FOR THE "OLD NICK" IS COMING.



and competitors fly from him, as his prices

AUG 12 1891

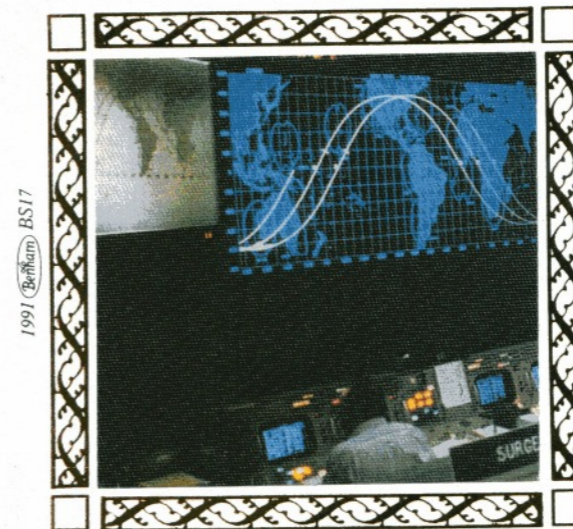
Stationery and Paper line. Thanking  
Yours respectfully,  
Green & Nicholson, Janesville, Wis.



1891 cent pre-paid postal card sent from Green & Nicholson stationers in Janesville Wisconsin. Reverse of card shows a humorous advance warning of a visit.

## 3. The Effects of Technology

### SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS



NASA Control Room



CHARLES BABBAGE BIRTH CENTENARY  
Sci√m  
SCIENCE MUSEUM  
LONDON SW7  
5 MARCH 1991

Charles Babbage invented the first computer to help Herschel with his computations of the stars.

Bertram  
The Bayle,  
Folkestone

1991 Scientific Achievements. Birth centenary of Charles Babbage "The Father of the Computer" on Benham's Silk

Thanks to Charles Babbage computers have become part of our everyday life. His realisation that routine calculations could be carried out mechanically led to a sophisticated specialized calculating machine and ultimately the first digital computer in the world more than 100 years before it could be produced. The effect of this innovation has made an enormous difference to the ways we communicate today.

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY YEAR



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

1982 GB Information Technology Issue  
Words, pictures and numbers, and the development of tools and techniques, have played an important role in man's need to record and communicate. Information technology today is all about the use of computers, microelectronics and telecommunications to help us produce, store, obtain and send messages more reliably, quickly and economically than our ancestors could ever have done.



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE  
BORWICH 119D  
5-9-2000

2000 Mind and Matter Issue  
showing hand operating a mouse  
and with computer and pen on  
postmark