Lecture 8: the spread and development of printing in the first 100 years

Question which will appear on the midterm (to keep in mind during Houghton visit): Choose one book which you saw at Houghton Library. Give a basic physical description of the book (format, paper, binding) and the presentation of the text (font, page layout, pagination, finding devices, divisions of the text, paratext). Explain what you can learn from these considerations about the likely place of this book and text in its cultural context (target audience, any specific motivations of author and publisher).

I. The spread of printing: key explosion 1469-73.
- From Rhine valley (Strasbourg, Cologne, Bamberg by 1464); to Italy (Subiaco, then Rome: 1465; Venice: 1469); Paris 1470; Barcelona 1473; Westminster 1476.
- Italy dominates: in 80 cities by 1500; 45% of European output
- Retreat of manuscript culture: scribes continue to produce certain kinds of books to 1530 (luxury editions) + copying as cheap way of getting a copy of a book

Problems of counting how many incunabula. Ca. 27,000 titles (or up to 37,000?); print runs rising from 200-300 to 1000 and more =12-20 mill copies? (EU pop’n ca. 100 mill)

II. Humanism and printing
- Humanism=recovery of Greek, classical Latin, ancient texts
- Humanism begins before printing: e.g. Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459): papal bureaucrat, with interlude as secretary to Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester (1419-23); copyist in lettera antica (from Carolingian script) and book hunter
- Aldus Manutius (1449-1515): literary man turned printer. The model of the humanist printshop, with workers alongside Erasmus. First to print Greek (many editiones principes), italic, high-quality small-format octavos (“Aldines”)—made print trendy

III. Changes to the presentation of the text
- Font: roman (humanist); Gothic (vernacular, German); italic (Aldus Manutius)
- Format: folio, quarto, octavo and smaller. Big=serious, but Aldine octavos (1501)
- Signatures – foliation –pagination (only in 16th), errata lists
- Title page, finding devices, illustrations, errata
- Kinds of texts: conservative choices at first, then diversification (after 1473); 77% of incunabula are in Latin; 45% on religious topics