

Skills for Medievalists: Week 7a Activity

What was the date of the earliest printed edition of *Canterbury Tales* on the EEBO database?

- 1477.

By whom and where was the edition published and why might this be significant? Were later editions published by the same printer and is there anything significant about them?

- Published by William Caxton in London.
- Significant as Caxton brought the printing press to England.¹
- Later editions published at same location but by different people, at least up until about mid-18th Century.
- Significant as later editions are other printed copies and the prologue to other texts.

What comments can you make about illustrated editions of *Canterbury Tales*? What images are contained in it?

- Illustration in a 1497 edition of the text by John Lydgate of a sketched image of knight on horseback. Text is contained in the 'prologue of the storye of Thebes'.

What (if anything) can you find out about the history and provenance of the editions you looked at? To which collection or library do the physical editions of the editions belong? Is any information provided about the digitisation process?

- Both versions are at the British library from the 'English Short Text Catalogue'. The 1477 edition was the first printed book in Britain.²

What insights might these digital editions offer about the history of the book?

- Digital editions offer the publication details as well as the biographic name and number of a text, which allows for information on the history of the book to be looked at.

¹ Charles Knight, *William Caxton, The First English Printer: A Biography*. (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1877), pp. 1 – 10.

² British Library, *English Short Title Catalogue* (2019) <<https://www.bl.uk/projects/english-short-title-catalogue>> [Accessed: 29 November 2020].

- Also, websites such as the EEBO enable historians to track back the history of a book due to the multitude of editions being located on them.

Biography

Secondary Sources

Knight, C. *William Caxton, The First English Printer: A Biography*. (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1877).

Electronic Sources

British Library, *English Short Title Catalogue* (2019) <<https://www.bl.uk/projects/english-short-title-catalogue>> [Accessed: 29 November 2020].