This is the first number of a newsletter about fingerprints issued by the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Paris, in association with the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. The editors welcome contributions, in French or in English, which should be addressed to the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes. We would like your comments and criticisms, reports of your fingerprinting activities, and perhaps your short articles.

The reason for the appearance of this newsletter is the publication of a new set of rules for recording fingerprints. NLS and IRHT have, for a number of years, been recording fingerprints in accordance with the original standard [J.W. Jolliffe, *Computers and early books* (1974), Appendix B] as revised in 1974 by NLS, in consultation with Mr Jolliffe.

Whatever the precise bibliographical role of fingerprints, it is obviously advantageous not only that the same set of rules holds good wherever fingerprinting is done, but also that these rules are so clear and all-embracing that different copies of the same book yield identical fingerprints no matter where and by whom the fingerprints are recorded.

The experience of NLS fingerprinters was that while with ordinary, straightforward books there was never any doubt about the correct fingerprints, more unusual books often brought about division of opinion: this did not augur well for the wider use of fingerprints. IRHT fingerprinters too were not totally satisfied with the 1974 standard, and so it seemed natural that we should pool our experience and co-operate, again consulting Mr Jolliffe, in writing a new standard. This is what we have done, and the results, in French and English, are presented below (the French text has already been published in *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France* 25 no.9-10 [1980], pp.461-479).

Those who have used, or simply read, the 1974 standard will notice, in particular, that the whole set of rules has been re-organized to facilitate consultation. Also, a number of points have been expanded, most obviously in the matter of the treatment of abbreviations and contractions. We hope that these new rules will eliminate all the uncertainties in fingerprinting. But it would be over-optimistic to believe that they will never need further emendation and

clarification, especially as the real test of their completeness will be their application by persons who have no previous experience of recording fingerprints. It is for this reason that we trust that everybody will feel free to write in with suggestions, queries and comments, which will provide material for further numbers of this newsletter.

Many of those interested in fingerprints will have read Mr J.P. Feather's report 'Tests on the use of the fingerprint', which was submitted to the British Library's Research and Development Department. We considered this carefully, and found his proposed revised standard helpful in the preparation of our own, and we note that both this Anglo-French co-operation and the publication of this newsletter are in accordance with his desires. But we have not adopted his proposal for a 4-character fingerprint. We do not feel sufficiently confident about this, and, as he says, by retaining the 16-character fingerprint, we also retain the option to convert to the 4-character version. The same cannot be said of our decision to reject his special rules for single sheets. In both Edinburgh and Paris single sheets (explicitly excluded from the original standard) have not been treated as a separate category, though it is probably true to say that not many single sheets have been fingerprinted. We think that we have not seen sufficient evidence to show that our practice is unworkable, and that therefore perhaps we might continue as before until such time as revision on this point is shown to be necessary.

REPORT FROM EDINBURGH

In the early 1970s the National Library of Scotland started work on the preparation of two special catalogues: one of its 17th-century foreign books, and one of its 18th-century Scottish imprints. For this purpose books in these two categories that were already in the Library had to be recatalogued by the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules and it was decided that fingerprints should at the same time be recorded for each entry. Later, in the mid-1970s, the practice of recording fingerprints was extended to all the Library's current accessions published before 1801 (more recently 1821).

Current accessions of antiquarian books come from a variety of sources; individually, by purchase and donation, and

in collections, which may be purchased or presented, but are sometimes deposited, as in the case of one large library received some years ago and now called the Blairs Collection. Catalogue records including fingerprints for all of these are entered in the general catalogue of printed books. When fingerprinting began, the general catalogue was on cards, but a machine-readable catalogue for current accessions was begun in 1979, in which antiquarian records, with fingerprints, are now entered, with the exception of records for the Blairs Collection (these continue to be entered in the now otherwise closed card catalogue). A fingerprint is recorded for each bibliographical unit, so that a multi-volume work will have several fingerprints: in the card catalogue all fingerprints appear, but for obvious reasons of economy the first fingerprint only is printed out in each entry in the machine-readable catalogue, and the second and subsequent fingerprints are stored in the database.

In the year 1979-1980, approximately 2,200 antiquarian books were catalogued and fingerprinted, of which 770 were Blairs books. This annual total was lower than usual, because it was in that year that antiquarian cataloguing started to be entered in the machine-readable catalogue; in the previous year the total had been over 4,600, of which approximately half were Blairs. It is estimated that the Library now has some 18,000 records of pre-1821 books that include fingerprints.

The National Library of Scotland is one of a group of libraries co-operating in an automation project, the Scottish Libraries Co-operative Automation Project (SCOLCAP), which produces a union catalogue of machine-readable entries on COM microfiche (SCOLCAT) as well as the catalogues of the individual libraries. These entries follow the MARC format, and the National Library enters its fingerprints in a local field (529), so that they appear only in the Library's own catalogues. The fingerprints are structured into four sub-fields: $a contains the first 8 characters; $b contains the second 8 characters, followed by a 3, a 7 or a C; $c contains the date (recorded by the first method: see Rule III.4.b.1 of the *Fingerprinter's Manual*); and $d contains the number of the volume or part if there is more than one. The reason for dividing the fingerprint up in this way is that it is often impossible to use the first 8 characters for computer-matching if the

fingerprint is recorded from an imperfect volume, and this makes it convenient to be able to use the second 8 characters.

LES EMPREINTES VUES DE PARIS

Dans le domaine francophone, sur la base des informations dont nous disposons, les réalisations en matière de relevé des empreintes ont commencé à prendre forme depuis 1977 :

1. à Lyon d'abord, à l'occasion du catalogage du fonds du XVIe siècle de la bibliothèque municipale, le stock le plus important d'empreintes (soit environ 1000) a été constitué ;

2. à Bruxelles ensuite, J.-F. Gilmont a relevé et fait relever dans le monde entier les empreintes des éditions de Jean Crespin, avec la collaboration de l'IRHT pour les éditions conservées à Paris ;

3. à Paris enfin, la bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève a relevé les empreintes d'une partie des livres scientifiques du XVIe siècle dont elle vient de publier le catalogue.   *

La section de l'Humanisme de l'IRHT pour sa part, depuis 1969, s'intéresse à la méthode des empreintes, dans le cadre de ses études sur les livres anciens. Elle a procédé à des séries de tests qui lui ont permis de participer avec nos collègues britanniques à la redaction originale du guide en 1973 et 1974, de présenter le système des empreintes au Congrès de l'IFLA-FIAB à Bruxelles en 1977 * et de contribuer aujourd'hui à la version définitive du *Guide du releveur d'empreintes*. En outre, elle a contribué à la formation de ceux qui avaient l'intention d'adopter le système et elle s'efforce de répondre aux questions des utilisateurs. Enfin, en attendant que soient décidés le lieu et les modalités d'une banque des empreintes centralisée, l'IRHT a procédé à des essais d'automatisation en grandeur réelle. Ainsi la mise sur support magnétique des empreintes des livres français de la British Library de Londres (supplément au *STC French, XVIth century*) a été commencée au fur et à mesure de la progression du recatalogage. Il en va de même pour les empreintes qui nous ont été remises par les releveurs mentionnés plus haut. Grâce à ce début de mise en mémoire, non seulement nous constituons le premier noyau d'une banque des empreintes, mais nous pouvons

préciser les meilleures conditions de
lisibilité de la transcription manuelle.

Les *Nouvelles des empreintes*

Ce premier numéro des *Nouvelles des
empreintes* présente donc la version
définitive en anglais et en français
rigoureusement semblable du guide du
releveur. Les numéros suivants seront un
trait d'union entre utilisateurs : tout
lecteur sera donc un jour ou l'autre
amené à devenir lui-même rédacteur.

Ce bulletin pourrait, nous semble-t-il,
comporter les rubriques suivantes:-

1. travaux en cours : ou des relevés
d'empreintes sont-ils effectués à
l'occasion d un catalogage ou de travaux
particuliers et quel traitement, automatisé
ou manuel, leur est-il appliqué?

2. difficultés et solutions : le guide du
releveur ne sera plus modifié quant au
fond mais des précisions pourront lui être
apportées pour lever les ambiguités
d'application rencontrées par chacun.
Cette publication est en effet destinée à
des initiés ou à de futurs initiés,
bibliothèques ou chercheurs isolés, qui
confrontent les questions concrètes de
leur pratique quotidienne aux règles
formulées par le guide,

3. apport du système des empreintes à
l'histoire de l'édition d'un texte :
on pourrait rassembler ici les découvertes
ou les remarques touchant les états et les
émissions d'une édition, les modifications
en cours de tirage, les éditions partagées
implicites, etc.,

4. banque des empreintes : à chacun de
décrire format d'entrée et programme afin
qu'une banque des empreintes parvienne à
se constituer à moyen terme.

La parution de cette version définitive du
Guide du releveur d'empreintes devrait
contribuer à lever les hésitations et à
augmenter le nombre des réalisations. Au
delà d'une parution régulière des
Nouvelles des empreintes, et grâce à elle,
le terme le plus souhaitable ne serait-il
pas de se réunir autour d'une table ronde
pour hâter la coopération internationale?

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* Cf. notre article dans *Bulletin des
Bibliothèques de France*, t.25, n° 9-10
(septembre-octobre 1980), p.461-479.