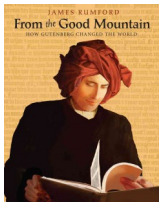


How Gutenberg Changed the World



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While some predict the imminent demise of the printed book, some profess that the printed book will continue on in perpetuity. I stand with the second group. As much as I enjoy the convenience of ebooks, there is a majesty to a beautifully illustrated and bound printed book that not even the most colorfully animated ebooks can equal. There is so much ephemeral electronic correspondence today that a printed book, by its sheer mass and substance commands a certain amount of respect. Or, perhaps it's simply the history of the printed book that I revere.

From the Good Mountain: How Gutenberg Changed the World lavishly presents the early history of the printed book as pioneered by Johannes Gutenberg in 1450. Categorized as a biography, this new picturebook by James Rumford focuses more on Gutenberg's revolutionary invention of the printing press, than on the life of Gutenberg himself. Each richly illustrated double-page spread describes the process of creating a book as a mystery of sorts, asking the reader to guess the elements that formed the finished product: "What was this thing made of rags and bones?" and answering on the next page: "It was paper, and it was ready."

The epilogue to this book notes that Gutenberg's invention remains a bit of a mystery, as no one knows for sure how he was able to produce such beautifully crisp and clear letters in the 1400s. But some of the books he produced more than 500 years ago endure to this day. In fact a copy of one of those books resides in Bloomington at the [Lily Library](#) on the campus of Indiana University. [The Gutenberg Bible](#) rests in a glass case on display in the Lily Library, open for anyone to visit.

From the Good Mountain concludes with an illustration of computer circuitry, suggesting that as hand copied books gave way to printed ones, and printed books give way to ebooks, perhaps it doesn't matter at all what books look like -- what form they take -- as long as people keep writing and reading them. [What are you reading today?](#)

Posted by Lisa C. on May 10, 2013

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