NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Findings about the Printer's Manuscript

Author(s) Royal Skousen

Reference M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds., *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*, 37 (published in lieu of *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11/2 [2002]).

ISBN 0-934893-68-3

Abstract Royal Skousen gives information about the history, corrections, and use of the printer's manuscript of the Book of Mormon.

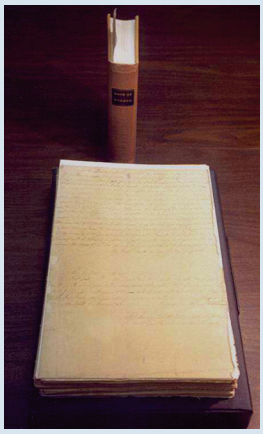
to identify the sequence of printing for many of the book's 37 gatherings.

Not only is Royal one of a handful of scholars to ever work directly with the printer's manuscript in its original format, he is also one of the last to work with it in that format. When obtained by the RLDS Church in 1903, the printer's manuscript was composed of large sheets of paper, each folded in half to make a folio of two leaves or four pages. Typically, six sheets were arranged into gatherings of 24 numbered pages. The manuscript thus was a stack of 21 gatherings, with the text reading from front to back like a book. But soon after Royal's last visit (in 1994) and as a result of this critical text project, the printer's manuscript underwent conservation in Salt Lake City at the Historical Department there.

This conservation process lasted about six months and was done under the direction of Dale Heaps. The procedure was very detailed. First of all, we had to establish that the ink was insoluble, and then we were able to wash the leaves to remove the dirt, grime, and oil that had accumulated through the years. In another bath, we treated the leaves with deacidifying chemicals in order to prevent further deterioration

Findings about the Printer's Manuscript

1. For several of the gatherings, the typesetter cut the manuscript leaves in order to facilitate the typesetting. At some later time, these cut portions were pinned together in their correct order.



2. Some corrections were done immediately by the original scribe, some by a correcting scribe, some by the typesetter, and some considerably later by Joseph Smith (for the 1837 edition). In the printer's manuscript, Joseph Smith made over two thousand changes to the text by overwriting the original words or by crossing out words and inserting other words between the lines. These changes are mostly grammatical, but some involve clarification.

3. The scribes used a variety of paper types, with different thicknesses. Some of the sheets were lined in advance, others were lined by the scribe page by page as the copying took place. The watermark O&H is found on a handful of leaves.

4. The printer's manuscript does not contain any part of the original manuscript. The gatherings of the two manuscripts were never mixed up, even though for gatherings 16–19 of the printer's manuscript, the original manuscript was instead taken to the printer. In 3 Nephi 19 an unknown scribe (identified as scribe 2 of the printer's manuscript) took over while Oliver Cowdery jumped ahead to start copying Ether (which begins gathering 20). When scribe 2 finally finished Mormon (at the end of gathering 19), he left the rest of the page blank. This nearly blank page is the last page of a short gathering of three sheets (12 pages). There are no other partially blank pages within either the original or printer's manuscript.

5. Gatherings 16–19 of the printer's manuscript were not used by the printer. These gatherings show none of the typesetter's marks or corrections. This observation is confirmed by the presence of the typesetter's punctuation marks on corresponding fragments of the original manuscript.

6. Chapter specifications in the manuscripts are not original to the text. The chapter numbers were almost always added later. One of these chapter numbers (on page 261 of the printer's manuscript) is in blue ink rather than the normal black ink (now turned brown).

—Royal Skousen

ABOVE: *The original form of the printer's manuscript, a stack of 21 gatherings (each typically having six folded sheets), placed for size comparison in front of a facsimile 1830 edition.*