



The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume IV: The Irish Book in English, 1800-1891

James H. Murphy

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The Oxford History of the Irish Book is a major new series that charts one of the most venerable book cultures in Europe, from the earliest manuscript compilations to the flourishing book industries of the late twentieth century. For the first time, it offers a history of the Irish book as a created object situated in a world of communications, trade, transport, power, and money, and examines the ways in which books have both reflected and influenced social, political, and intellectual formations in Ireland. It is an important project for the understanding of Ireland's written and printed heritage, and is by its nature of profound cross-cultural significance, embracing as it does all the written and printed traditions and heritages of Ireland and placing them in the global context of a worldwide interest in book histories.

Volume III: The Irish Book in English 1800-1890 details the story of the book in Ireland from the Act of Union, which ended Ireland's lucrative exemption from British copyright, to the Irish revival, with its emphasis on cultural nationalism. Though retaining its own identity during this period the Irish publishing industry also participated in a wider British publishing culture, less perhaps the result of political change than the result of the industrialization of production. The chapters in this volume deal with book production and distribution and the differing of ways in which publishing existed in Dublin, Belfast, and the provinces. The nineteenth century saw a dramatic rise in literacy rates in Ireland, the advent of national education, and the development of new opportunities and spaces for reading that eclipsed previous communal reading practices. Religious publishing was a major enterprise not only because of the rise in devotionism but also because of the religious controversies that raged in the early part of the century. Literary genres engaged both Irish and British audiences with Irish issues, though they found a publishing outlet largely through London publishers. Scholarly societies of both the antiquarian and scientific varieties sustained a relatively high degree of local publishing, mostly through journals. Medical and musical publishing appeared for quite a while to defy the centralizing pull of British publishing. In spite of the challenges of the times, writers, publishers, readers, and institutions often responded with energy and creativity to a world of extraordinary change. It was a world of considerable diversity and great fascination. Relying on a high degree of original research, both archival and bibliographical, this volume treats both general trends and individual stories.

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