

The Anatomy of a Book

1. Introduction

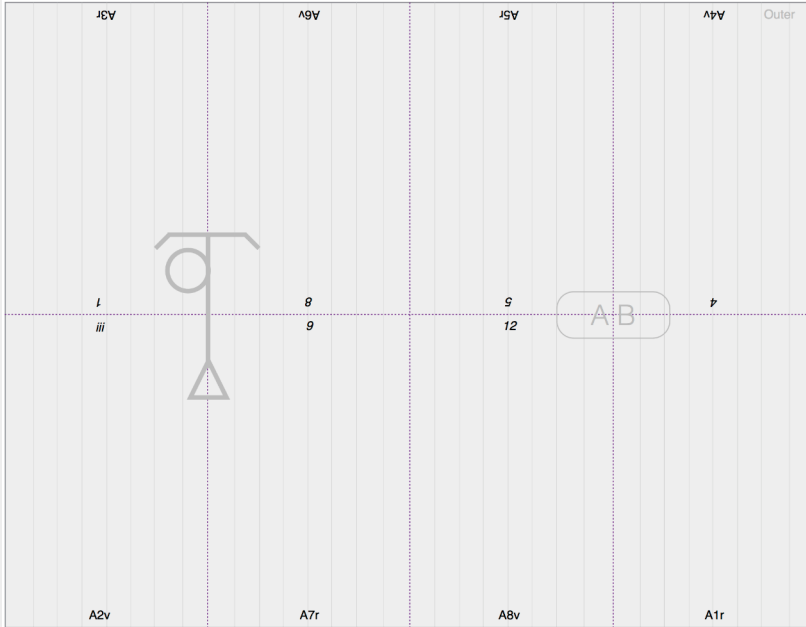
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In the 1545 Sacrobosco on display, pages are missing from the front matter. Other books have misnumbered pages. Others have page numbers that are missing or that restart from 1 in different sections. To sort all of this out, it helps to have a little understanding of the anatomy of an early book.



Sacrobosco, *De sphaera* (Wittenberg, 1545))



1 sheet, 8 leaves, 16 pages, octavo format, for the "A" gathering

- **Sheet:** A large sheet of paper inserted into the printing press and printed on both sides. It will be folded 1 or more times before being bound into the book.
- **Leaf:** One “page” of paper, both front and back, within a text block.
- **Gathering:** All the leaves (or pages) of a text block that were printed on a single, large sheet of paper, before it was folded up for sewing to make the text block.
- **Format:** If a book is made of gatherings consisting of 8 leaves (or 16 pages), it is in the “octavo” format. Octavo books are typically small enough to be held by a single hand, depending on the size of the original sheets of paper.

- **Collation:** Gatherings may be labeled alphabetically; for example, the first gathering in a text block might be called “A.” A list of all gatherings and how many pages are in each gathering is the collation of a book.
- **Text block:** All the pages of the book, sewn together as a unit (minus the covers and spine). The side of the text block opposite the spine is called the fore edge.

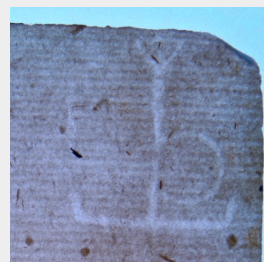
• **Laid paper:**

Paper made by hand, displaying a ribbed or “laid” texture, used during the hand-press period of printing before the 19th century, after which paper became manufactured by mechanical processes.






- **Chain lines:** Visible lines in the texture of laid paper that run parallel to the short side of the paper sheets.

- **Watermarks:** Patterns pressed into laid paper while it is still wet, which remain visible when the printed page is held up to light.



On the front: This extensively annotated copy of the *Sphaera* of Sacrobosco includes 3 hand-colored calculating wheels, or “volvelles.” Editions of Sacrobosco’s *Sphaera* remained the most popular university textbooks in astronomy in the 16th century. This 1545 edition was printed in Wittenberg, where Luther was a professor. Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s collaborator in theological and university reform, contributed a preface. In this censored copy, the preface has been excised and Melanchthon’s name deleted from the title page. It was owned by a Capuchin monastery in Wil, Switzerland. The remains of the excised pages, visible in the gutter between leaves A1 and B1, show that the preface was removed subsequent to the binding of the book.

Kerry Magruder

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