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Gutenberg Press II

Lead: In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg began the first book printed in the western world using moveable metal type. Those copies of the Gutenberg Bible that have survived are among the most valued artifacts in the world.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: After spending almost two decades in Strasbourg, working secretly on a new type of printing press, Johannes Gutenberg returned to his hometown of Mainz and formed

a partnership so as to exploit his revolutionary invention - movable metal type. There is evidence that movable type had been used in China for thousands of years and even in Europe before Gutenberg's invention, but the process used fashioned letters from clay or porcelain or wood. They would break, splinter or wear down after a few uses. Gutenberg spent years solving the problem of deterioration. Blocks, each one bearing a precise metallic raised letter on its face were held together tightly in a wooden form, ink was rolled over the raised letters, then the form was pressed against paper. Because the letters were metallic they were extremely durable, could be used over and over again and

reformatted to make different words and sentences.

Gutenberg began his Bible project in 1454. He produced approximately 180 copies of what is known as the 42 line Bible – two columns per page each with 42 lines of text. About 48 copies survive, six are in the United States, including one in the Library of Congress. Before his death around 1468, he had printed a Latin dictionary, an encyclopedia, and an astronomical calendar. By 1500, some thirty years after his death, more than 6,000 separate works had been printed using 1,000 printers in Europe. Gutenberg’s process, which permitted the inexpensive dissemination of ideas and knowledge,

paved the way for dramatic cultural and social change in Europe, including the Protestant Reformation. Research assistance by Ann H. Johnson and Elizabeth Fairchild.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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