

## Printing Press

The printing press with metal letters that can be moved is one of the world's great inventions. It changed the way people learn and think.

Early printing systems used blocks of wood. Words or pictures were carved into the block. Ink was put on the board. A piece of paper was then pushed down on the ink.

Book printing with blocks of wood likely started in China around the year 600. Books about medicine were common. By 1300, woodblock printing was in Europe.

Printing with blocks had one key weak point. Making new blocks was a slow process that needed lots of labour. Each new block took weeks to make.

Printing with movable letters was a big improvement. Each letter was on a separate block. Put some blocks together and you spell a word. String many blocks together and you create sentences. When it was time to print a new page, shifting the letters around was relatively easy.

The printing press with movable letters started in China around 1000. It wasn't popular because the Chinese language has so many characters. That was a problem because print shops needed many workers to find letters and make words.

In the 1430s, Johannes Gutenberg made a printing press with movable metal letters. He also made a special ink that worked well on paper. The printing press was popular in Europe. By 1480, there were more than 100 printing presses. By 1500, there were millions of books.

His press expanded the range of information people could read. Books helped scientists share information and learn new things. People like Galileo and Newton were sharing ideas that started a revolution in science. Books also made religion less powerful because people had more information and were thinking for themselves.

New information and innovative ideas encouraged people to ask questions. They wondered about nature, stars, and the purpose of government. Thanks to the printing press, they found some answers.