

A Word About Zines and Printing

There were a variety of printing methods available to the would-be zine publisher. Here is a brief list of the most common types found (all of these varying types can be found in the Brooks Fanzine Collection):

Hectographs: This method, invented in 1876, worked with a dye-impregnated master copy, which was laid into a shallow pan of firm gelatin. Once the gelatin had absorbed the dye, fresh sheets could be carefully laid onto the gelatin to transfer the image. This method generally produced around 50 or so usable copies.

Mimeography: This method, invented by A.B. Dick in 1884, used heavily waxed master stencils that the writing implement (pen or mechanical) could then cut through to remove the wax. This stencil would then be placed on the drum of a rotary machine which would then force ink through the cuts in the stencil to transfer the ink to pages beyond. Most people of a certain age remember mimeo machines as a feature of classroom test production and a distinctive aroma of the inks and solvents involved. This method survives into the 21st century.

Spirit Duplicator: Also known as a Ditto Machine (from the Ditto company which was chief manufacturer), these machines used two-ply “spirit masters” or “ditto masters” in which the top sheet received the impressions of the art or writing and the sheet underneath was coated in a colored wax. Under pressure of the transfer, the image would appear in mirror form on the back of the first sheet, which would then be separated from the now discardable wax sheet, affixed reverse side outward to an rotary drum. This method could only reliably produce about 500 copies, fewer than were possible from a mimeo master stencil.

Modern Photocopying and Printers: In the world in which most of us live, examples of modern electrostatic printers can be found almost everywhere today.