

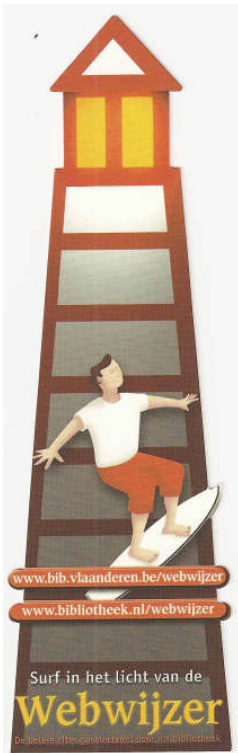
Diecut Bookmarks

A Shape with a Purpose

an occasional paper of The Bookmark Society

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Clockwise from bottom centre:
Computer keyboard & mouse, Microsoft, UK
Owl, Maltine, USA
Web Surfer, Netherlands
Medal ribbon, Legion des Combattants (Soldiers from occupied France fighting on the Russian front)
Whale, Soapine soap, USA
Big Ben, Victoria & Albert Museum, UK



and this? PTO...



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

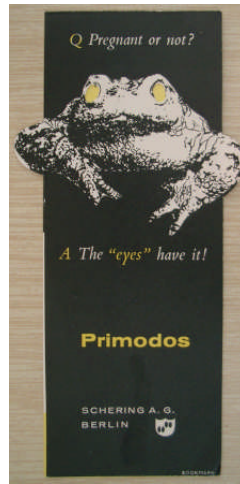


Fig. 3



Fig. 3

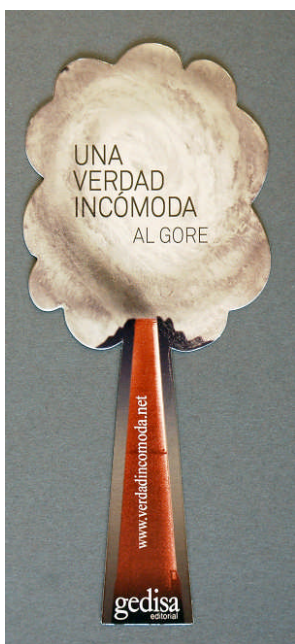


Fig. 5

The prototype bookmark is rectangular. A strip of paper, or even a piece of ribbon, automatically lends itself to straight sides. But it is very rare for bookmarks to do no more than mark the place in a book. Purely decorative bookmarks are designed to be as attractive as possible; advisory bookmarks want you to look at them and think twice; promotional bookmarks want to sock you between the eyes.

So bookmarks often depart from the rectangular (to judge by my own collection, about 4% do). Sometimes the outline is angled or curved to be ornamental (fig. 1). Sometimes the subject portrayed is trying to escape from the rectangular cage (figs. 2 & 3). Often there is the Kilroy effect of a shape looking over the top of a bookmark (figs 4 & 5). There is also a whole category of bookmarks where the page flaps have a diecut shape. Fig. 8 is one example from many: there is also the petal of a flower (as in Whitehead & Hoag markers) a human hand (Pears soap) or in one striking Dutch specimen, a toilet seat. None of these are included in this paper, which deals only with those bookmarks which completely take the shape of the subject, as in figs. 6,7,9,10 below.

Sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between these shaped (diecut) bookmarks and trade cards, particularly when they unfold to give more information. When there is a ribbon attached, they have probably come from a catalogue or year book, and so may be definitely adopted. Otherwise, the overall proportions or the thickness have to be taken into account. In the end the decision is a personal one, and may quite well be governed by the desire to include a particularly fine specimen in one's collection.



..Al Gore on climate change, fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Leisure

This paper does not attempt to carry out a detailed survey of diecut bookmarks, or even to portray a representative sample. It simply shows a selection of bookmarks from the October 2009 swapmeet, to give an idea of the breadth of this subject. Even establishing categories is difficult – often the image portrays the item being advertised, sometimes (as in Penguin Books above) the link is to the manufacturer, occasionally (Scottish hydroelectric on page 6) all you can do is consult the bookmark!

Above, smoking speaks for itself, and then three of the following images indicate the contents of the books they promote: Shardik the bear, the Art of Ancient Greece (Arte Griego, Parramon, Spain), and a feather advertising Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, from the Netherlands.

The performing arts are represented by Fay Bainton in 'East meets West' in New York in 1918 and by the 1936 French spy film 'Les Loups entre Eux' starring Jules Berry. The saxophone is one of several published by Bueschner of Indiana, 'makers of saxophones and musical instruments' (I always thought a saxophone *was* a musical instrument). Outdoor pursuits are covered by the cyclist, who has an articulated neck so he can be arranged at different stages of effort, and (another feather) Spanish youth hostels.





Food

It is not surprising that many diecut bookmarks feature food, which has an absorbing interest for most of us. Bottles are probably the most common image of all, and they advertise a surprising variety of contents. Beyond bottles, the range is enormous.

Of the examples shown here, the Rowntrees chocolate in a lady's hand was voted the most attractive bookmark at our swapmeet in October 2009, and one can see why.



Rowntree's Chocolate: ca. 1900



Glebe Sugar: ca. 1900

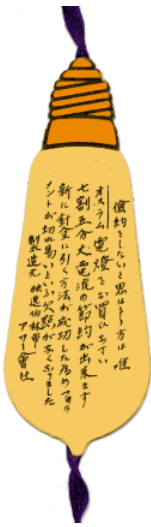


Fig. 1 Japan



Fig. 2 Germany

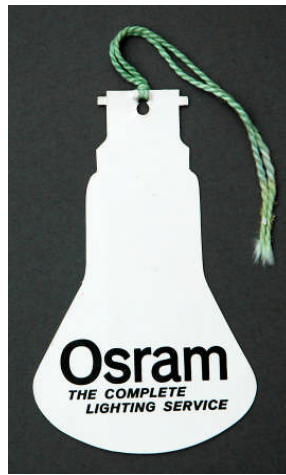


Fig. 3



Fig. 4 Austria



Fig. 5 Italy

Series

Some manufacturers produced series of bookmarks tracing their product development, or for different countries. Above (figs. 1,2,4,5) are some of the well-known Osram bulbs, which appeared on ribbons in exhibition catalogues and similar publications in the early 20th century, with a modern equivalent at Fig. 3 for contrast.

Incidentally, light bulbs were a popular subject for bookmarks. Figs. 6 and 7 show Aegma and Tantalum.

The Heinz gherkin or pickle (depending on which side of the Atlantic you live) is possibly the largest diecut series, with 20-30 known designs, and different wording on the back giving more than 30 variants in all.

These bookmarks were produced in the 1890s and early 1900s. Fig. 10 shows the original keystone logo in full: the key has long since disappeared but the keystone shape is still a familiar part of the brand packaging worldwide. Figs. 11 and 12 below show how the same design was presented for different countries – a different idea of beauty perhaps?

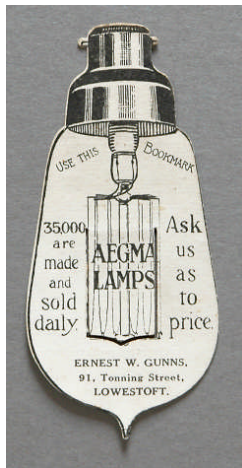


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



8. Britain



9 and 10 USA



11. France

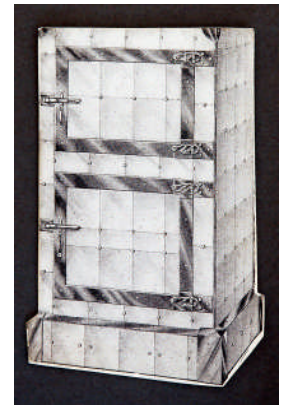


12. USA

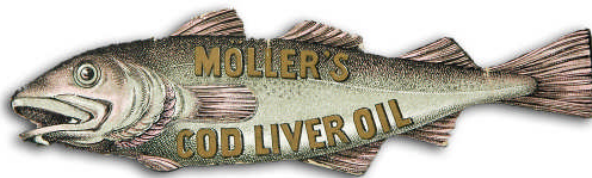


Household, Health and Hygiene

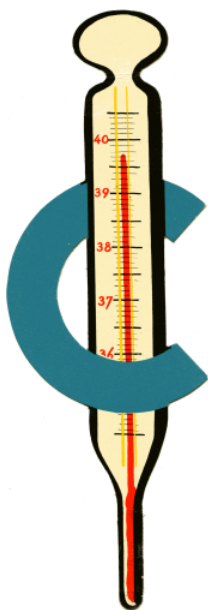
Heat it, cool it, clean it.. cook it, wash it, dose it...
There is a product, and a bookmark, for every need.



Porcelain Refrigerators



Feel free to bug us any time.....



Vitamins



Buckwater Ranges



Flea Powder



.....Scottish

Hydroelectric



Lysine B12, France



Albert Einstein



Marlene Dietrich



St Ivel butter, UK

Men and Machines



People fill our bookmarks. Historical figures impress us with the pedigree of the product advertised, more modern icons commemorate celebrities or role models. His peers could admire the comfort of the man in Banner pyjamas, or be reassured by the professionalism of the motoring man in uniform, in the motor show catalogue.



Machines and their components fill our lives too. For work or holiday, to convey us or rescue us, they ask us to choose them above all others – silently, via a bookmark.





There are still groups we have barely touched on. Fish, feet, keys, and medicines all repay exploration. But we finish with

Writing Implements

If you have finished reading, maybe you should be writing!

