



Development Plan for
Bowne & Co., Stationers

211 Water Street, New York, NY

Prepared by Friends of Bowne, August 2011

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Bowne in Brief

Bowne & Co., Stationers is a remarkable entity among New York City's cultural institutions. It is a museum-like repository of historic artifacts and technology, a working display of nineteenth-century craft, and a functioning retail store. It is the namesake of a stationery and printing company once on Pearl Street, founded in 1775 by the Bownes, a prominent New York City family. What evolved into Bowne, Inc. flourished as a financial printing company in Manhattan until 2010 when it was bought and renamed. Bowne & Co., Stationers is now the sole remnant of that important part of New York mercantile history.

The Bowne & Co., Stationers address, 211 Water Street, is an early 19th-century building on a charming, cobbled pedestrian street. Visitors to Bowne are enchanted—and surprised—to discover what appears to be a commercial printing shop of about 1875. Most assume it is original. The interior of the shop is actually a 36-year-old re-creation so well constructed that, for a moment, visitors might truly believe that a small bit of the 19th century remains in continuous use in modern Manhattan.

Edmund Stanley, Jr., former president of Bowne, Inc. proved to have great foresight when he “refounded” Bowne & Co., Stationers at the South Street Seaport in 1975. Bowne at the Seaport was conceived of at an auspicious moment: it could buy, at low prices, significant antique printing equipment and type being cast off at that time and replaced by newer technology. Thus Bowne was able to build a large, quality collection. Since the late 1990s, there has been an explosion of interest in letterpress printing both commercially and academically. An increasing number of design schools and graphic design students are focusing on history of graphic design, printing, and typography. It is unfortunate that, at a time when schools have begun offering letterpress printing, and letterpress studios and shops have proliferated in the city, Bowne, a New York original, has closed.

Friends of Bowne believes it is time for Bowne to live up to its potential and the original vision of Edmund Stanley. Whether Bowne & Co., Stationers remains connected to a larger institution, it can and should become a center of craft, preservation, and the history of printing, type, and downtown New York.

The following pages present strategies and information to help make this possible.

A Plan for Bowne & Co., Stationers

We propose that Bowne become a center for the study and practice of historic printing crafts, especially as they relate to the history of New York City and the Seaport District.

Development Strategies for Bowne

Bowne can, with some considered adjustments and initiative, become a successful museum, study center, and an imaginative and singular retail opportunity. Three existing model businesses are discussed following these development ideas.

DESCRIBE BOWNE BETTER WITH AN EXPANDED NAME

Visitors are often confused about what Bowne is. We propose expanding Bowne's name in order to better describe Bowne's role as a specialized museum and working craft center, so that it becomes:

Bowne and Co., Stationers
Center for Historic Printing and Type

HOST TOURS, SCHOLARLY TALKS, SPECIAL WORKSHOPS, VISITING STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS, AND LITERARY EVENTS

Bowne can be involved in anything related to the history of printing, typefounding, and the book arts in downtown New York, the history of the Seaport District, and the literature of seafaring and New York City, such as the writing of Walt Whitman and Herman Melville.

Participants could include:

- Design students
- Students of material culture, American studies, American literature, and museum studies
- Printing historians
- Historians of New York City
- Corporate groups

CARE FOR THE COLLECTION AND MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE FOR STUDY AND LIMITED USE

If Bowne's value lies in its collection, then that collection needs to be cared for better than it has been. Also, the collection needs to be made more known and more accessible.

CREATE A LIBRARY OF PRINTING HISTORY

Bowne has a good, but neglected, collection of books. This needs to be cared for and made accessible.

OFFER CLASSES

The Bowne shop is too small for most classes, but one of the empty galleries on either side of Bowne could be fit out with presses and type (which the Seaport Museum already owns), and various kinds of classes could be offered in this space, including:

- Printing
- Woodcutting
- Typesetting
- History of printing and typefounding

Bowne would be competing with several other businesses in New York City for students, but Bowne will stand out because of the range and quality of its type and presses, its beautiful setting, and its focus on 19th-century methods.

BUILD A MEMBERSHIP GROUP, BASED ON THE EXISTING SUPPORT GROUP *FRIENDS OF BOWNE*

Friends of Bowne has brought together many supporters of Bowne, and, once Bowne re-opens, this group should form the basis of a growing group of future customers, students, and patrons. Friends of Bowne could evolve into a due-paying annual membership. In addition to traditional museum benefits of discounts and news, members could receive printed perks, like greeting cards, postcards, and bookmarks, on a regular basis.

CULTIVATE VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS

Bowne should continue its program for volunteers from the community and interns from local design schools to help with shop tasks, such as distributing type, composing type, and developing content for the web.

PRINT FOR THE COMMUNITY, BOTH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Bowne could make a point of offering discounted printing to sympathetic neighborhood businesses, such as The New Amsterdam Market. It could offer discounted printing for national and international typographic and printing events and causes.

ENDOW A BOWNE FELLOWSHIP

Bowne could establish a fellowship program to support the study of printing and publishing history. Such a fellowship would build a relationship between Bowne and academia.

CREATE INCOME THROUGH RETAIL OPERATIONS

As a working job printing shop, Bowne is in the perfect position to offer its goods for sale – in the shop and online – under a proprietary brand (see pages 7 and 8).

Creating Income for Bowne & Co., Stationers

Unlike some other printing museums, Bowne is a working job printing shop and stationery store that strives to sustain itself through the sale of its printing and resale of products related to printing and typography. These income sources can be developed and added to in the following ways:

Some of the goals listed in the previous section can bring income to Bowne as well as visitors and respect, especially:

CLASSES

TOURS

TALKS

MEMBERSHIP

SPECIAL EVENTS, SUCH AS BOOK LAUNCH PARTIES

In addition, Bowne can:

CREATE A BOWNE BRAND

Bowne holds an important collection of 19th-century typefaces and illustrations. This collection should be used to develop products that are associated with fine printing, 19th-century design, literature, New York City, and seafaring. These products could be printed at Bowne or elsewhere, but would always be based on Bowne's collection, and can include:

Social stationery

Notecards

Postcards

Fine Prints

Digitized or scanned versions of wood and metal type and images in the collection

Books and pamphlets

Textiles and textile patterns

Wallpaper

Bags, both paper and cloth

Clothing and accessories ornamented with type and images from the collection

Knowledge of the market for these specialized products should lead their design, and product development should be ambitious. New York City has many museum stores that offer similar goods; Bowne should stand out by offering unique products.

A financially successful Bowne brand cannot depend only on the printing presses at Bowne & Co.; printing the necessary quantities would wear out the valuable antique presses and type in the collection. While some products can be produced using Bowne's collection, most Bowne products would eventually have to be printed by outside letterpress printers.

MARKET ONLINE

Bowne has never had a dedicated website nor taken advantage of digital marketing. Any products created at Bowne could be sold through a shop on the crafts website Etsy.com, a Bowne website, and/or affiliations with appropriate resellers. Bowne's printing services and resources could also be publicized on its website.

CONTINUE JOB PRINTING

Bowne should continue to print small custom jobs, but there is a limit to what can be done on its few antique presses. However the appeal of printing with Bowne has always been that the printing is done on premises, as in a 19th-century shop. There could be two sets of prices for job printing ordered at Bowne: printing that takes place on site, and printing that is sent to other shops. Printing offsite will be marked up to offset the management of the jobs.

LICENSE TYPEFACES FOR DIGITAL PRODUCTION

Bowne holds typefaces that do not exist in a digital form. Some type designers have already used Bowne as a reference when creating digital typefaces. Bowne could license some of its typefaces to font companies for digital redrawings of Bowne type. In addition to redrawings, high-resolution scans of typefaces could be offered for sale, as complete alphabets or individual letters.

Models for Bowne

There are existing printing and type museums that can serve as models and inspiration for Bowne. These include:

HATCH SHOW PRINT (Nashville, Tennessee)

Hatch Show Print is a working urban printing museum in an historic space.

The aspects of Hatch that can inspire Bowne are:

- It is part of a larger institution, the Country Music Hall of Fame, but allowed to manage itself with much independence.
- It had developed ties to industries and professions outside of printing, namely graphic design and music.
- Management is largely left to a devoted printer and artist.
- Hatch uses its collections to develop and design successful products, such as wine labels, t-shirts, and prints.
- Hatch has a successful internship program.

HAMILTON TYPE AND PRINTING MUSEUM (Two Rivers, Wisconsin)

Hamilton began as a museum of a large wood type factory, where it is housed.

Hamilton is a model because:

- Hamilton is managed by a printer with close ties to the graphic design community.
- Many graphic design students come to Hamilton for classes and workshops.
- Interns from around the world work at Hamilton.
- Hamilton has worked to develop products for sale, has an online store, and recently teamed with Target to design a line of t-shirts.

MUSEUM PLANTINS-MORETUS (Antwerp, Belgium)

The Museum Plantins-Moretus houses some of the most important objects and documents related to the history of printing in the western hemisphere. It is a model in many ways, including:

- The museum covers the history of type, printing, and the printing business in a specific location, Antwerp, as Bowne could for New York City.
- The museum includes a magnificent library, a resource for researchers.
- It is partnered with other, supportive organizations, including The Plantin Society and a print collection called The Municipal Print Room.

Projected Annual Income

The numbers below are informed by Bowne's annual income in 2009 and 2010.

These estimates could be very different if Bowne partnered with more than one institution, or an institution other than a museum.

These numbers are gross income.

| | After one to two years | After three to five years |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| JOB PRINTING ON SITE | \$35,000 | \$45,000 |
| OFFSITE JOB PRINTING | \$7,500 | \$15,000 |
| MERCHANDISE SALES ON SITE | | |
| Resale | \$70,000 | \$70,000 |
| Bowne Products | \$35,000 | \$70,000 |
| MERCHANDISE SALES ONLINE | | |
| Resale | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| Bowne Products | \$20,000 | \$50,000 |
| LICENSING | | |
| Typeface licensing | \$500 | \$1,000 |
| PROGRAMMING | | |
| (Classess, events, memberships) | \$4,000 | \$7,500 |
| TOTAL PROJECTED ANNUAL INCOME | <u>\$192,000</u> | <u>\$278,500</u> |

Estimated Annual Operating Expenses

The annual operating expenses below are based on the expenses of Bowne's last couple of years of operation, with some modifications, based on the assumption that some of the plans in the first part of this document would be implemented.

| | After one to two years | After three to five years |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| STAFF SALARIES | | |
| Bowne requires three staff members, at the minimum: a master printer/curator, a printer, and a sales clerk. The master printer should supervise printing, education, the collection, product development, and merchandising. | | |
| Master Printer/Curator: <i>Supervises printing, education, the collection, and product development</i> | \$60,000/year | \$65,000/year |
| Printer: <i>Does most of the job printing and helps teach classes</i> | \$20,000/year <i>(part-time)</i> | \$40,000/year <i>(full-time)</i> |
| Sales Clerk/Merchandiser: <i>Handles sales and merchandising</i> | \$35,000/year | \$40,000/year |

PURCHASE OF PAPER AND INK

Paper must be purchased for most job printing and product development. Prices charged for job printing will cover paper costs; shop sales should cover paper purchased for product development. Ink purchase is a fairly rare occurrence, as ink lasts a long time.

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Paper for Product development | \$2,000 | \$4,000 |
| Ink | \$150 | \$150 |

PURCHASE OF PRINTING BY OFFSITE LETTERPRESS PRINTERS

Bowne would develop ongoing relationships with several dependable off-site letterpress printers, so that the shop doesn't overtax its collection. Job printing done offsite will be covered by the charges to customers, and will also be marked up to cover staff time.

Off-site printing of Bowne products must be recovered in the sale of Bowne products.

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|----------|
| Off-site job printing | \$5,500 | \$10,000 |
| Off-site product printing | \$5,000 | \$15,000 |

PRESS MAINTENANCE

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Press rollers, parts, etc. | \$400 | \$400 |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|

PURCHASE OF MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES

| | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Blade sharpening, art supplies, construction for shop display, etc. | \$500 | \$750 |
|--|-------|-------|

SHOP MERCHANDISE FOR RESALE

| | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| | \$45,000 | \$45,000 |
|--|----------|----------|

ONLINE MARKETING

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Website maintenance, ad fees | \$3,000 | \$1,000 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|

RENT

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| Supplied by the city? | \$0 | \$0 |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|

POWER

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| Supplied by the city? | \$0 | \$0 |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|

STRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----|
| Supplied by the Seaport Museum | \$0 | \$0 |
| | (some fraction of museum maintenance staff salary) | |

INSURANCE

| | | |
|----------|-----|-----|
| Supplied | \$0 | \$0 |
|----------|-----|-----|

**TOTAL PROJECTED
ANNUAL EXPENSES**

| | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| | <u>\$176,550</u> | <u>\$221,300</u> |
|--|------------------|------------------|

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