

ALMANACS

The format of the newspaper emerged long before the medium itself in the guise of the almanac. These documents, really pamphlets, started long before printing was invented as collections of calendars showing days of the week with astrological tables and star charts. They were used to help plan agricultural planting and more broadly to manage a household, by recording useful information such as the medicinal properties of plants.

They also started to be used to make predictions about the future and are sometimes called prognostications. Handwritten almanacs are described by Bacon in the 1200s and Chaucer in the 1300s. One of the earliest applications of printing was to make the almanac format available to a much wider public; Gutenberg himself produced one soon after publishing his famous bible. As early as 1500 the Kalender of Shepherdes was being printed in Paris with woodcut illustrations. Printed almanacs proved to have huge popular appeal. Most publishers produced several different titles to make full use of their machines and staff. Benjamin Franklin published one in America called Poor Richard's Almanack.

In pursuit of their household management role, some publishers included pages printed with the days of the week but containing