The Renaissance And Modernity: Invention Of Printing Press

The Renaissance was the period between the 14th and 17th centuries in Europe. It was the period noted for the invention of important devices that helped reshape knowledge. It was also the beginning of a period that played an important role in shaping up modern society today. The invention is a discovery, whether accidental or the result of search and effort. It is the power of mental creation or construction. Through evolution, these inventions, and discoveries have influenced the modern age today, and I believe will keep influencing the future as well. In the renaissance period, literacy was a privilege for a handful of people. Furthermore, these copies were expensive and not available to all. Knowledge at that time only depended on hand-written copies of a few texts. Among many inventions, the one that stands out for its influence, the means of disseminating knowledge, and the mass production of text was the printing press.

First, scientific inventions and discoveries began to emerge such as The Universe, medicine etc. and these findings were hand-written in Greek and Roman texts. They might be ancient, but they were progressive compared to the discourses of the middle ages which intended to oppose scientific revisions of knowledge, for instance, Galileo believing and supporting Copernicus's heliocentric theory. It was in the later renaissance that they insisted they have proof that the earth revolved around the sun. Since then, education became more widespread and it was possible to publish another kind of scientific discoveries. The printing press, I believe, has had a great impact on civilization. It was so effective that it remained unchanged for about 400 years. According to Lord Clark's Civilization, the first man to take advantage of the printing press was Erasmus. He was a religious controversialist and the first journalist who reported on the corruption of church authorities. However, printing had been discovered long before Erasmus's time. Gutenberg's Bible printed in 1456 proves that. The bible was made available to everyone at a price that many could afford.

Gradually, the realization of printing books was starting to reach all mankind and thus led to people wanting to be more literate. The printing press made it possible to learn new skills, made people more aware about life and society. According to Stearns, "Expansion frequently generated various kinds of conflict, but in the long run successful, enlarged civilizations spread enough common institutions and cultural values, and often shared trading systems and social patterns, to create a certain amount of coherence throughout the expanded region." (Chapter 4) Printing not only encouraged people to be more involved in writing or sharing their own ideas but also expanded the urban, middle classes such as the merchants, lawyers, government officials etc. Textual criticism was possible as well as the dissemination of ideas. (lecture slides)

The printing press not only satisfied the renaissance period but also the modern period. The modern era, according to the dictionary is a period beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century when information became accessible through publications and through the manipulation of information by computers and computer networks. As of today, the printing press may not be used as much, since over the years new printers was made through technology such as inject and 3D printers. At the end of the renaissance period printing press was being used for trade journals for example, how to build houses, how to cook and many more. Printing press in a way also formed politics. It encouraged laws to be made and millions of copies of these are available

now. Modern printing managed to be quicker, efficient, and produce higher-quality printing with latest technologies. However, as Stearns said “The early modern centuries – 1450 or so well into the 18th century – are always seen as times of great change in Western Europe. Indeed, the magnitude of change is what often overwhelms textbook treatments, leading them to forget the rest of the world.” (chapter 8) That being said, it has also led to the rise of competition among people. Moreover, the culture and importance of hand-written books has slowly vanished. In this modern period, even the use of printing has deteriorated due to technological advancements like e-books.

Although we are moving away from print, we still rely on books or printed articles for research. In any case, when we have access to digital publications, we are able to make print copies of them. When we think about the benefits of the press, it is essential to understand that the renaissance is said to be the foundation of modernity. The discussion has shown that even though we are gradually transitioning to digital information we are still reliant on large parts on printed materials whose production simply built on the first printing press which was not as mechanized as modern presses are.

Citations:

1. Lord Clark’s Civilization, Protest & Communication
2. Peter N. Stearns, Western Civilization in World History, 2003, chapter 4, chapter 8, pp 32-69
3. Modernity & the West: A General Introduction to Course Theories, lecture slides
4. https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/modern%20era