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NATURAL HISTORY, ORIGINAL HAND-COLOURED WOOD ENGRAVINGS PUBLISHED C1850

Published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, framed in dark wood

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) is the third oldest publishing house in England, after the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses. It was founded in 1698 by an Anglican priest, Thomas Bray who believed passionately in the power of the printed word. In its first two hundred years, the Society founded many charity schools for poor students in the 7 to 11 age group. It is from these schools that the modern concept of primary and secondary education has grown. Although the SPCK originally dealt with just Christian subjects, from the 1830s onwards it was publishing general educational topics as well. SPCK's early publications were distributed through a network of supporters who received books and tracts to sell or give away in their own localities. Large quantities of Christian literature were provided for the Navy, and the Society actively encouraged the formation of parish libraries and was also an early provider of teacher training.

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