The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850. By Simon Franklin. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xv, 414 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. $120.00, hard bound.

Simon Franklin's *Russian Graphosphere* is a charming, erudite, and sometimes confounding book—one that is exemplary in its breadth of sources and originality, but one that also declares "this book does not have, and does not have to have, a general conclusion. It is a series of surveys and investigations, not a presentation of a thesis" (268). Franklin asks us to make sense on our own of his "explorations of fragments and moments": "The wider proposition is not that graphospheres—Russian or any other—must be encompassed and explained, but that heuristic benefits can and do follow from the identification of the graphosphere as a thing, as an object of study and as a context for studies" (274). So, can such eclectic study of the "graphosphere" help us understand bigger things?

Franklin defines the graphosphere as "the space of the visible word" (1) and proposes to look "at words, at cultures of writing, at how and why words come to be where they are in the world around us" (9), often comparing Russia to Europe or other settings. The graphosphere is dynamic, a physical space and a lived experience that "forms and dissolves, re-forms and mutates, as a kind of ecosystem, of which we ourselves are part" (183).

Franklin assembles all possible information about public writing from 1450 to 1850. As in his 2002 book on writing in early Rus´, he identifies three types. "Primary" writing constitutes objects whose purpose was the text: ecclesiastical and secular books and documents in handwriting or print. "Secondary" writing constitutes items produced for another purpose and inscribed. Their tremendous variety includes icons, coins, seals and jetons, silver and gold goblets, votive embroidery, triumphal arches and statuary. "Tertiary" writing is unrelated to an object's purpose: graffiti and marginalia. Avoiding the empire's multilingualism, Franklin focuses on Slavonic writing in the Russian heartland, sometimes focusing on Moscow and St. Petersburg (Chap. 5). His greatest frustration is the difficulty of exploring "subjectivity," that is, personal reactions to the graphosphere.

The book can seem descriptive and empirical with Franklin's many fascinating "mini-histories"—on when bookshelves appeared, on noblewomen's needlework, on word pictures in Baroque poetry, on the incidence of Greek, Latin, French, and other languages in the graphosphere, on sentimentalism's disdain for the printed word. But overall, sometimes implicitly, Franklin demonstrates a compelling story of the dynamics of cultural interaction.

That tale is reflected in his periodization. Franklin inaugurates the graphosphere when new varieties of public writing bounded onto the scene, with building plaques in Latin and Slavonic, cannons with inscriptions and bureaucratic documents joining ecclesiastical production of manuscript books. He ends when new technologies, expanded literacy, political reform,

and commercialization presented Russians with a new relationship to the visible word. To call 1450 to 1850 a single period might seem meaningless. Historians may be eliding the "Petrine divide," but nevertheless the contrast between Ivan III's modest principality and Nicholas I's empire on the verge of the Great Reforms is breath-taking. Yet Franklin demonstrates that the graphosphere stayed fundamentally stable, shaped by a consistent approach to cultural encounter.

That approach was twofold. The first approach he hardly problematizes, simply describes. This is when new graphospheric options were accepted, usually from abroad. Such occurred in the late fifteenth century: Hapsburg diplomacy brought models of regalia; Vatican diplomacy brought Italian architects and engineers; diaspora Greeks brought administrative know-how from the late Palaeologan court; recently-conquered Novgorod brought a lively cultural package influenced by the city's Baltic German interconnections. Much was adopted. The same openness later greeted the Ruthenian graphosphere. Ukrainian and Belarusian clerics brought to Muscovy a lively, reformed Orthodoxy, forged in the cauldron of resistance to Protestantism and Catholic Counter-Reformation. Ruthenians provided Russia's first printers, scholarly expertise for revision of ecclesiastical books and for schools, genres of Baroque engraving, art, panegyric, and poetry. What is significant here, and under-articulated by Franklin, is that state-building secular elites and ecclesiastical hierarchs found these cultural influences useful and accessible. Edward L. Keenan noted that cultures borrow when they are ready and when avenues of communication are available (an accessible language or religion or military cooperation, for example), not simply because they are exposed to new ideas, practices, or technologies. Russia's adaptation of new practices is the flip side of Franklin's most strongly articulated argument about cultural rejection.

Like Keenan, Franklin argues against technological determinism. He made a similar argument in his earlier book: early Rus′ princes and church hierarchs were presented with Byzantine models that they did not deem necessary (bureaucratic documentation) or feasible (Greek and Slavonic higher education). Here, he pronounces that Russia did not have a "print revolution" and *should* not have had one. "Neither acquaintance with, nor engagement with, nor the acquisition of, a particular technology of writing was sufficient to catalyse the regular use, growth or spread of that technology. There was no inexorable logic. . ." (269). Russia did adopt printing, energetically by the seventeenth century, but its relationship to print cannot be called a "print revolution" since in the European experience that was fueled by open access to printing by a commercialized public sphere. As Franklin shows, this did not develop in Russia through to 1850.

Franklin details several "non-Gutenberg moments" when Russians (significantly, political and church elites) exposed to printed books or presses chose not to adopt: Novgorod Archbishop Gennadii's project to assemble a Slavonic Bible that included German printers; Maksim Grek's arriving loaded down with books printed in Venice; Ivan Fedorov and others' liturgical printing in the 1560s and 1580s. Manuscript culture endured. When the "continuous history of institutionalized printing" began around 1615 (47), it

served church and state exclusively. The church found printing indispensable for disseminating liturgical and devotional texts and primers and later for maintaining the accuracy of revised texts in an era of reform and schism. By Patriarch Adrian's decree of 1697, all church service books were printed. Similarly, the state mobilized handwriting and print to build empire-wide bureaucracy. Here Franklin might have paused to reflect on notarial culture, so important in the medieval and early modern European development of political, commercial, legal, and personal documentation. That Russia lacked a notary corps independent of state bureaucracy inhibited the "bottom-up" development of the graphosphere.

Subsequent non-Gutenberg moments did not much diversify the graphosphere: Peter I's enthusiasm for print did not dislodge the official monopoly over presses; Catherine II's rocky episode of private presses (1783–96) ended with statutes of censorship imposed on re-authorized private printing (1801, 1804); the Russian Bible Society was closed down in 1824 in official rejection not only of its faster print technology and mass distribution but also of its implicit usurpation of the church's exclusive role as intermediary between the Orthodox and their faith. Thus, Franklin demonstrates that "political decisions" (269) shaped Russia's graphosphere far more than social or economic forces.

Official control of the graphosphere is fascinatingly illustrated by the unassuming blank form. Printed en masse with spaces to be filled in by hand, this hybrid of print and handwriting was introduced initially under Patriarch Nikon (another Ruthenian innovation). The church used blank forms for administrative efficiency (for appointments and indulgences), income, and regulation (printed antimensia attested to a church's consecration). The state used blanks as well, and Peter I and his successors heightened their coercive power by requiring from 1714 that all internal travelers obtain passes filled out by local authorities, in essence internal passports. In this, Franklin points out, Russia preceded Europe by almost a century. Russia could more easily control the production and authenticity of travel documents than could European countries with their thousands of private presses. Population control was crucial in Russia, where labor for military service and artisanal, manufacturing, and agrarian work was always in short supply. An inescapable element of the Russian graphosphere was the state's control of individual mobility.

Alongside authoritative writing produced by official sources, of course, non-authoritative writing existed in the Russia graphosphere. From the eighteenth century onward, with elite culture Europeanizing, with prosperity and commercialization, the graphosphere exploded and expanded from cities to provinces and even the countryside: porcelain table services were painted and snuffboxes monogrammed, diaries written, novels published, broadsheets and newspapers read aloud in taverns, printed icons pinned up in huts, signs hung on shops, mileposts erected along highways. One regrets that Franklin did not at least speculate on the personal experience of living in this "thickening" (168, 250) graphosphere and on such socio-political questions as its relation to the development of a "public sphere." By 1850 new calculations about the utility of new technologies, new demands from

society, new resources to sustain a sphere of non-authoritative writing, all set the stage for a changed relationship to the visible written word.

So is "graphosphere" a useful concept? Decidedly so. Simon Franklin is too modest in describing his work as having no "grand narrative" (268); this is a book about cultural encounters, cultural change, and political power. He provides us with four centuries' evidence of how people and institutions mobilized the written word to suit their needs for self-expression, material consumption, information, and social control.

Nancy Shields Kollman
Stanford University