In the beginning was the Word. Print added to its fascination. If it has been an enriching experience to combine academic requirements with a fascination for the printed word, I have also accumulated many debts. Acknowledging these debts is a pleasant way of discharging them.

Firstly, my thanks go to Professor K.N. Panikkar, not only for his guidance and supervision, but also for the enormous freedom (a commodity that is becoming rare in the academic world) I have had working under him. He let me work at my own pace, watched amusedly as I went about clumsily with my research, and guided it to its early fruition.

The Centre for Historical Studies has taught me much and I benefited from its well-structured courses: for an amateur historian it was the first taste of the rigours of the discipline. Interaction with the faculty and the students was a great intellectual stimulus. I would like to specially mention Dr Neeladri Bhattacharya's course on historical methods.

This is the place to mention Professor S. Ambirajan, Dr M.S.S. Pandian, Professor R.Rajagopalan and Dr D. Veeraraghavan who persuaded a reluctant provincial student to seek entry into JNU.

As this study is also somewhat of an insider's account of the world of Tamil publishing and letters, of which I have been a part for the last decade or so, I have learnt a lot from the authors, publishers, printers and booksellers. It would be impossible to list everybody's name. I name the following who deserve more than mere words of acknowledgement.

Thiru Ma. Mani and Thiru Tha. Kovendan not only taught me the craft of proofreading. Dr M.D. Rajukumar initiated me into the tricks of the trade as he went about publishing my books.

Thiru R. Muthukumarasamy, shared not only his encyclopaedic knowledge of Tamil books and publishing, but also gave me exclusive access to the rare papers of the Saiva Siddhanta Kazhagam. I consider it a privilege to have been his understudy at the Maraimalai Adigal Library, arguably the finest repository of Tamil imprints.

Thanks to Dr P. Athiyaman for the many hours of shared research and to Dr V. Arasu for sharing his knowledge of Tamil books.

Professor A. Sivasubramanian, as usual, provided me with a home away from home at Tuticorin, the southern base-camp for my fieldwork. He accompanied me to the field, gave useful tips on
fieldwork in folklore research, pointed out the pre-historic Adithanalloor mounds and spent hours with me watching the sculptures at Krishnapuram. But for him, I could not have hoped to meet M. Kasim, the seventy-year-old chapman of Srivaikundam.

Professor S. Pothi Reddy did something similar for me at Madurai: he put me up in his home, talked in an animated fashion about various aspects of Tamil publishing and helped me draw out more from the mouths of the Pudumandapam booksellers.

The trip to Karaikkudi to take a look at the famed Kottaiyur Roja Muthiah Chettiar collection was made possible through the 'patronage' of Steve Hughes. The exciting motorbike ride to Pudukkottai (with a break at the Thirumayyam castle) will remain long in my memory. Steve also shared my enthusiasm for popular literature, and joined me on many book-hunting expeditions.

It was nice to be back on a 9 to 7 schedule at the Maraimalai Adigal Library, where my former colleagues treated me with the same regard.

The U.V. Swaminatha Iyer Library opened up its rare private paper collection for the first time in many years.

Dr T. Dayanandan Francis ordered a thorough search of the record room of the Christian Literature Society and embarrassed me with his generosity.

Thiru S.S. Kannan's Karl Marx Library, Madras gave me the confidence to face the academic world of JNU.

Thiru V. Srinivasa not only let me have a look at his grandfather 'Alliance' Kuppuswamy Iyer's diary but also permitted me to consult his biography in manuscript form.

Gandhi Kalaimandram, Rajapalayam and C. Vijayaraghavachari Memorial Library, Salem have useful collections.

The Commissioner of the Tamilnadu Archives permitted me to consult the Government of Madras records and also the library.

Thiru V.O.C. Subramaniam permitted me to consult his father, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai's papers. It will be my lasting regret that he did not live to see this work completed. The late Vidwan V. Sarojini and Thiru S.S. Ramaswamy permitted me to look at S. Vaiyapuri Pillai's papers and books. Thiru Deepa. Natarajan let me have a look at T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar's book collection, as did Thiru C.S. Kannayiram of C.K. Subramania Mudaliar's books.

Over the years Dr M.S.S. Pandian has been a great influence on my intellectual development. He went through the various drafts of this thesis and provided useful comments. I only hope this work lives up at least a little to his expectations.
My good old friend S. Venkatraman demonstrated that the computer was an idiot, and commanded it to do my bidding.

V.S. Srikanth, S. Anandhi, M.V. Shobana and T.K. Arun were a source of moral strength during a period of illness in the early stages of this work.

The Sunday visits to the cinema hall with Rajini, Khaleel and Kishore was my way of unwinding after a week's poring over undecipherable manuscripts. Rajini provided not only a quiet place to work but also good food to go with it.

Mr R.R. Pillai, unlike the printers I speak of in Chapter 4, did a very professional job of word processing the thesis and, believe me, kept his word on deadlines.

K.G. Sreenivas, Ritu Gairola and Chaitali Mukherjee helped in reading the proofs. Asif helped by not reading the proofs.

An ICHR Junior Research Fellowship came late in the day. But no patron has had a more grateful client.