

The Economic History of the Book in the Early Modern Period

Antwerp University, 4–6 October 2018

Call for Papers

A singular carrier of ideas, information, knowledge, and culture, the book has always held a special place in society. Aspects of production, distribution and consumption have been the subject of thorough study, but analyses of the economics of the book trade remain rare, or less than comprehensive. The special status of the book, its importance for pre-industrial economy as a whole, and the limitations of the sources available seem to have prevented the undertaking of comparative, diachronic and synchronic surveys from the economics point of view. Recently, the topic of the economics of the book trade has come to the fore. Scholars acknowledge the importance of the *price of books* and its impact on society. Especially in the absence of a system of freely accessible libraries, the price of books imposed an important obstacle to access to information and knowledge circulating in print in the Early Modern Period. It is important, therefore, to study the business models for production, price formulation and market development, starting with information about sales of new and second-hand books sold in shops, at fairs, and at public auctions.

This conference invites papers dealing with any aspects related to the economics of book production, book distribution and book consumption in the Early Modern Period. Potential topics are the cost of book production, the price of unbound versus bound books, the impact of paper and parchment on production costs; analyses of retail versus wholesale transactions; distribution costs for books (packing, transportation, tolls, unpacking, and insurance issues); and purely monetary issues of the book trade related to payments made in different currencies, in cash or on account. In particular, we welcome papers which address the methodological problems of a historical economical approach to handpress books and the different types of payments and currencies involved, in addition to surveys addressing this issue from a comparative point of view (comparison between printing shops, on local, regional or transnational levels). We wish to programme papers going beyond isolated cases, and including, for instance, analyses of wider synchronic or diachronic data sets, which will help to clarify essential trends and factors in the economy of the book in Early Modern Europe.

Deadlines

Please submit proposals for papers (c. 400 words) to goran.proot@gmail.com by **31 January 2018**.

You will receive an answer by 15 March 2018.

Academic committee

- Dr. Renaud Adam, Université de Liège, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow – LE STUDIUM – Institute of Advanced Studies of Loire Valley / Centre d’Etudes Supérieures de la Renaissance (Tours)
- Prof. dr. Pierre Delsaerdt, History Department, Antwerp University/KU Leuven
- Prof. dr. Kees Schepers, Ruusbroec Institute, Antwerp University
- Prof. dr. Johan van Heesch, History Department, KU Leuven/Brussels, Royal Library
- Prof. Angela Nuovo, Università di Udine, Department of Humanities and Cultural Heritage - EMOBookTrade project (ERC 694476)
- Prof. dr. Jeroen Puttevils, History Department, Antwerp University
- Prof. dr. Violet Soen, History Department, KU Leuven
- Prof. dr. Bert De Munck, History Department, Antwerp University

In collaboration with Antwerp University, Antwerp University Library and the Ruusbroec Institute, the EMOBookTrade project (Università di Udine), Flanders Book Historical Society, Antwerp Bibliophile Society, Museum Plantin-Moretus & Antwerp Heritage Library Hendrik Conscience.