

Prices in Robert Estienne's booksellers' catalogues (Paris 1541-1552): a statistical analysis

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ABSTRACT

This survey focuses on prices as they were advertised by the Paris printer and bookseller Robert Estienne in nine booksellers' catalogues published between 1541 and 1552. 1,801 entries in total were entered onto a database; it has been possible to identify 77% of these from references to them in bibliographies, catalogues or other, mainly online, tools (in particular the *Universal Short Title Catalogue*, USTC). After exclusion of incomplete or doubtful data, 1,087 entries were selected for statistical analysis, in order to attempt to reveal overall trends as well as some of the main factors influencing prices of 'first-hand' (i.e., not second-hand), unbound books. These factors include the year of publication, the 'age' of editions, bibliographical format and use of any specific founts, such as Hebrew and Greek. Our analysis shows that prices of the majority of the editions mentioned more than once across different catalogues remained stable. In 13% of the cases for which enough data is present, prices varied. The results of this survey help us to understand something about the general price levels of books in Paris in this period, which in turn will help us develop a deeper understanding of the book trade on a wider scale in both time and space.

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In the course of the present survey, the author contacted curators and librarians in many different research and heritage libraries and collections based on the European continent and in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States. He would like to thank all of them for their help in identifying editions mentioned in Robert Estienne's booksellers' catalogues. The author would like to express his gratitude to Liz Baird (Oxford) and Fred Schreiber (New York, NY) for their advice and help.

KEYWORDS

Book history; economic history; price history; book trade; sixteenth century; early modern Europe.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this contribution is to attempt to reveal trends and factors influencing prices of books as they were being advertised in nine booksellers' catalogues by the Parisian printer and publisher Robert Estienne between 1541 and 1552. In the first phase of this study, the goal has been to try to better understand the main elements which determine price levels of books in this area and period. Therefore this survey is concerned with overall tendencies and factors rather than with individual cases, and favors a statistical approach rather than a case-by-case analysis. In a second phase, individual cases can be addressed using the findings of the present survey as a global backdrop.

First the corpus is briefly described. This is followed by a description of the methodology and choices made when carrying out this survey in order to obtain reliable datasets for individual catalogues. The third section presents certain statistical data for each catalogue. The fourth section describes the evolution of prices across the nine catalogues and is followed by general conclusions.

2. Corpus

This survey focuses on prices as they were advertised by Robert Estienne in printed booksellers' catalogues between 1541 and 1552. Perhaps a brief historical note, setting these in context, is relevant here: according to a *Census* of booksellers' catalogues and advertisements of printed books from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in preparation by Christian Coppens, there are – besides these Estienne catalogues – only sixteen other Parisian booksellers' catalogues for the sixteenth century known thus far (Coppens [2018]).¹ The earliest Paris booksellers' catalogue with prices was published around 1540 by Simon de Colines, from whom in total three different catalogues are known until about 1546. Three catalogues with prices published by Christian Wechel appeared in or about 1543. Three years later, Regnault and his son Claude Chaudière published their first booksellers' catalogue with prices, a second one following two years later. Mathieu David and Jean Loys both published one booksellers' catalogue with prices (in the period 1554-1547 and 1554 respectively). From Guillaume Morel six catalogues with prices are known, listing, in total, more than 1,300 prices in the period 1550-1562. In quantity, this corpus is only second to the one discussed in this contribution.

A brief reminder about Robert Estienne (I) himself (also known as *Robertus Stephanus*) might also be useful: he was the second son of Henri Estienne, who was active as a printer, bookseller and publisher in Paris from 1502 until his death in 1520 (Renouard 1837, vol. 2, 3). Robert's mother, Guyonne Viart, was widowed twice (Martin, Chartier & Vivet 1982, 231). After her first marriage to Jean Hygman (*fl.* 1484 – †c. 1500) (Barbier 2008, entry 24, 75), and her subsequent one to Henri Estienne, she got married late in 1521 or early 1522 for a third time to the printer and engraver Simon de Colines (†1546) (Renouard 1837, vol. 2, p. 5; Renouard 1894, 442–443; Amert 2012, 13). Like his father, Robert was active in the Parisian book trade as a lexicographer, printer, bookseller and publisher, working at first with Simon de Colines, and later alone, until 1550 or 1551. In this period, he was forced into exile

¹ I would like to thank the author of the *Census* for his generosity both for sharing drafts of his text and for the many discussions on this subject we have had over the last five years.

after condemnation of his editorial work on the Bible by the theologians of the Sorbonne, and moved to Geneva where he continued printing (Renouard 1837, vol. 2, 30–31). In 1543, *in tempore non suspectu*, however, Robert Estienne was appointed ‘*imprimeur du roi*’ [= ‘printer to the king’] and thus recognised as one of the key figures in the French book world; this honour lasted until 1550, when the title was passed on to his brother, Charles Estienne (Barbier 2008, entry 42, 96), who had taken over the family business. A booksellers’ catalogue from 1552 confirms the continued availability of Robert’s books in Paris, which were probably to be had in the rue Saint-Jean-de-Latran in Paris, where Charles was now running the printing shop (Barbier 2008, entry 49, 117). Robert Estienne died in Geneva in 1559.

Included in this survey are all booksellers’ catalogues published by Robert Estienne between 1541 and 1552, with prices. Only three of them can be dated with certainty: those of 1541, 1546, and 1552. Publication dates of the other six catalogues are derived from the dates of the editions mentioned. Two catalogues can be dated as ‘not before 1542’; four more catalogues are dated about (*circa*) 1544, about 1546, about 1547 and about 1549. Details of the dates are provided in Coppens’s *Census* (Coppens [2008]).

It is not known for whom Estienne’s catalogues were intended and, indeed, this may even have varied from catalogue to catalogue. I did not come across any information pointing in the direction of either the retail or the wholesale market. Manuscript marks, such as crosses in the margins and underlinings, or contemporary notes present in the copies consulted could have served both equally well. Neither is there anywhere an explicit indication of the currency used, though it is clear that the catalogues were conceived in Paris, and thus refer to ‘livres tournois’, the common currency at the time (Braudel & Spooner 1967, 380). The *livre tournois* (*livre*, abbreviated as l.; sometimes the catalogues mention ‘francs’) was divided into 20 *sous* (*sols*, s.), each of which was made up of 12 *deniers* (d.), meaning that one *livre tournois* was worth 240 deniers. There is no doubt about the fact that the books advertised were sold ‘en blanc’, i.e., without binding, which was common practice when advertising ‘new’, or more precisely, ‘first-hand’ books.

Copies of all nine catalogues were consulted, book-in-hand, leading, at a late stage of the survey, to the unexpected discovery of a second edition of the [not before] 1542 edition. Up to this point, in secondary literature as listed in Coppens’s *Census*, only eight editions had been distinguished. When I discovered that the Leiden copy and the Oxford copy of this catalogue actually use different type settings, and, consequently, are different editions, I decided to include the STCV ‘fingerprint’ (Van Impe, van Rossem & Proot 2005, 124–132) in the descriptions given below, as well as the dimensions of book blocks of the copies consulted thereafter.² This is why some of this information is lacking for copies consulted before that. This does not in fact pose a problem, because I was able visually to verify type settings of other copies by study of images of them.

A ‘diplomatic’ description of the title or the incipit according to the STCV rules is followed by edition information (imprint, or inferred place of publication, printer and date), bibliographical format, a collation formula and a foliation or pagination statement (Van Impe, van Rossem & Proot 2005, 107–

² See also the STCV Manual online: <http://manual.stcv.be/page/Fingerprint>.

123).³ In a number of cases, this is followed by the STCV fingerprint. All copies consulted book-in-hand are listed, and, of these, the copy from which the diplomatic descriptions of all the entries are processed is marked with an asterisk. For most copies I measured the dimensions of the book block in millimeters. In the case of the 1546 catalogue, two states of leaf A5 verso are distinguished on copy level. The descriptions conclude with a reference to the entry in Coppens's *Census*, which refers in turn to other secondary sources, editions and surveys.

The description of the [About 1544] catalogue is only partial: as recorded by Coppens in his *Census*, both the Paris and the Lyons copies lack the final bifolium (Coppens [2008]), which should only be present in a copy in Copenhagen. Images of the Copenhagen copy (Kongelige Bibliotek–Royal Library, 184,-381, 8°) were not available at the time of writing and so were not included in this survey. Apparently, those two leaves list 31 more titles. It is anticipated that the omission of this data, however, will not affect the overall results of this survey.

2.1 1541 catalogue

Libri in officina Roberti Stephani typographi regii, partim nati, partim restituti & excusi. [Printer's device]. [Paris, Robert Estienne, 1541]. 8vo, a⁸, 8 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # b1 a2 on : # b2 a3 m\$

Copies consulted:

- Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, Bblgr.IV, 120 Beibd. 1 (incomplete: lacks A4.5; 150 x 101 mm)
- Leiden, University Library, 1365 H3 (3) (incomplete: only a1–3).
- *Leuven, University Library, Tabularium, Rés. 3A 21013/1 (173 x 101 mm).
- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 8° 44967-9 (157 x 97 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 228.

2.2 [Not before 1542] catalogue, first edition

There are (at least) two editions of this catalogue. What is probably the first edition is present in the Leiden University Library copy; the second edition is present in at least two copies: the London British Library and the Oxford Bodleian copies. (The status of the copy in Vienna, in the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek), 56.676-A, has not yet been ascertained.) The typesetting of the title page is justified in the second edition, while it is not in the first edition. In some

³ See also the STCV Manual online: <http://manual.stcv.be/>.

cases, prices mentioned for the same entry differ between the two editions (see nos. 6, 17, 20, 22 in Table 2, cf. *infra*). The first edition lists 254 entries compared with 247 in the second edition. In addition, titles sometimes appear in a different order, resulting in different page layouts. The second edition sometimes has abbreviations in different places from those in the first one and rectifies a number of obvious composing mistakes. The combination of these elements points in the direction of the conception of two different editions, of which the Leiden edition is obviously earlier than the other one.

Libri in officina Rob. Stephani partim nati, partim restituti & excusi. [Paris, Robert Estienne, not before 1542]. 8vo, A⁸, 8 unnumbered leaves.

Copy consulted:

– *Leiden, University Library, 1365 H3 (2).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 229.

2.3 [Not before 1542] catalogue, second edition

Libri in officina Rob. Stephani partim nati, partim restituti & excusi. [Paris, Robert Estienne, not before 1542]. 8vo, A⁸, 8 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # *b1 A2 nta : # b2 A4 m\$do

Copies consulted:

– London, British Library, 820.d.11 (160 x 95 mm).

– *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Broxb. 100.1 (159 x 101 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2008], nr. 229 [bis].

2.4 [About 1544] catalogue

Libri in officina Roberti Stephani typographi regii, partim nati, partim restituti et excusi: partim etiam vaenales ab aliis impressi. [Printer's device]. [Paris, Robert Estienne, about 1544]. 8vo, A⁸ B⁴, 12 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # b1 A2 a\$es : # b2 B3 m\$

Copies consulted:

- *Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.968 (157 x 92 mm) (wants two additional leaves, *², apparently only present in the Kongelige Bibliotek–Royal Library copy, 184,-381, 8°, which could not be consulted for this survey). This copy is followed by a bifolium in quarto, or a (half) sheet printed on one side in two columns of an unknown booksellers' catalogue with prices.

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 230.

2.5 1546 catalogue

Libri in officina Roberti Stephani typographi regij, partim nati, partim restituti & excusi. [Printer's device] M.D.XLVI. IIII Id. Maii. 8vo, A⁸ B⁴, 12 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 154608 - # b1 A2 r : # b2 B3 ini

Copies consulted:

- Bern, Münsterbibliothek, Bong. V. 1013.1.
- *Leuven, University Library, Tabularium, Rés. 3A 21017/I.
- Leuven, University Library, Tabularium, Rés. 3A 21017/IV.
- London, British Library, 820.d.14 (1) (178 x 109 mm). Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '6 d.'
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Broxb. 100.2 (156 x 95 mm). Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '8 d.'
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, 8 A 15 (7) (143 x 91 mm). Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '6 d.'
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.969. (159 x 99 mm). Complete, but fol. A1 is followed by fol. A1 from the [About 1547] catalogue, and fol. A7 is followed by A2 of the same [About 1547] catalogue. Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '8 d.'
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.970. (165 x 102 mm). Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '6 d.'
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.972 (160 x 102 mm). This copy has on the title page the old shelf mark 'Q 733'. It is the first part in a Sammelband holding Rés.Q.972, Rés.Q.973 and Rés.Q.974. Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: '8 d.'

– Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. p.Q.442[.1] (148 x 93 mm). Different states: This copy has on fol. A5 verso, last line: ‘6 d.’ Incomplete: lacks B⁴. Sammelband, fol. A8 is followed by the [About 1549] catalogue.

– Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 8° 34344-3 (160 x 106 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 232.

2.6 [About 1546] catalogue

Libri vaenales in bibliopolio Roberti Stephani typographi Regii, tum ab Henrico Stephano patre, tum à Simone Colinæo eius vitrico excusi. [Paris: Robert Estienne, about 1546], 8vo, A–B⁸, 16 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # b1 A2 ica\$: # b2 B4 omm

Copies consulted:

- Leiden, University Library, 1365 H 3 (1).
- *Leuven, University Library, Tabularium, Rés. 3A 21017/III.
- London, British Library, 820.d.13 (178 x 110 mm). Silked copy.
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, 8 A 15 (8) (143 x 88 mm).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.973 (160 x 101 mm). This is the second part in a Sammelband holding Rés.Q.972, Rés.Q.973 and Rés.Q.974.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.975 (166 x 102 mm).
- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 8° 34344-5 (159 x 105 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 231.

2.7 [About 1547] catalogue

Haec ex officina Rob. Stephani prodierunt, ex quo suum ædidit indicem. [Paris: Robert Estienne, about 1547], 8vo, A², 4 p. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # *b1=b2 A1 iq

Copies consulted:

- *Leuven, University Library, Tabularium, 3A21017/II.
- London, British Library, 820.d.14 (2) (152 x 91 mm).
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.969.[bis] (160 x 100 mm). Complete. Fol. A1 is bound after fol. A1 from the 1546 catalogue, and the conjunct fol. A2 is bound after fol. A7 of the 1546 catalogue.
- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 8° 34344-4 (161 x 104 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 233

2.8 [About 1549] catalogue

[Incipit fol. B1 recto:] *Haec ex officina Rob. Stephani prodierunt, ex quo suum ædedit indicem.* [Paris: Robert Estienne, about 1549]. 8vo, B⁴, 4 unnumbered leaves. STCV fingerprint: 000008 - # b1 B1 ã\$: # b2 B3 ndie

Copies consulted:

- *Bern, Münsterbibliothek, Bong. V. 1013.1[bis].
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. p.Q.442[.2] (147 x 92 mm).

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 235.

2.9 1552 catalogue

Index librorum in hac officina impressorum. [Printer's device] Lvtetiae. M.D.LII. [printed by Charles Estienne for Robert Estienne?] 8vo, A–B⁸, (B8 blank); 15 unnumbered leaves and 1 blank leaf. STCV fingerprint: 155208 - # b1 A2 ma : # b2 B4 ,seo

Copies consulted:

- *Bern, Münsterbibliothek, Bong. V. 613.8.
- Leiden, University Library, 1365 H 3 (5).
- London, British Library, 820.d.16 (182 x 112 mm). Silked copy. Incomplete: lacks fol. B8 (blank).

- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Broxb. 100.5 (167 x 105 mm) Incomplete: lacks fol. B8 (blank)
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.971 (162 x 105 mm). Complete.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.976 (164 x 101 mm). Complete.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.Q.977 (167 x 101 mm). Complete.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés.X.26578 (5) (168 x 110 mm). Complete: fols. B7 and B8 are conjunct, the outer edge is still uncut.

Lit.: Coppens [2018], nr. 236.

3. Methodology

Except for a limited number of titles present in one copy only of the [About 1544] catalogue, all titles have been transcribed diplomatically along with the prices as cited in the catalogues. In total 1,801 entries were entered onto a database, of which it was possible to identify 1,387 (77.02%), either in online databases or catalogues or by consulting actual copies in libraries (145 cases). For the identification of titles, I used the USTC, because there is, at present, no complete, up-to-date bibliography describing Robert Estienne's editions which includes accurate transcriptions of titles, authors, imprints colophons and full collation formulae (bibliographic formats, collation statements, page and/or leaf counts), let alone 'fingerprints' which permit one to distinguish different type-settings.⁴ Robert Estienne reprinted many editions throughout his career. In cases where more than one edition was found, catalogue entries were matched with the most recent edition, unless specific details indicated otherwise. In a number of cases, it was impossible to link a catalogue entry with entries in USTC, because the information was too vague or doubtful.

Use was also made of Renouard's nineteenth-century bibliography on the Estiennes, but this work does not include collations, which are necessary in order to calculate the number of printing sheets required to produce one copy of a title (Renouard 1837). However, this bibliography does include prices of books, found in Robert Estienne's booksellers' catalogues, but without reference to sources, and, as a result, also without any dates for those prices.⁵ In cases where different prices turn up in

⁴ In 2014, a new bibliographic database was published online with descriptions of Paris imprints published between 1501 and 1540: BP16, *Bibliographie des éditions parisiennes du 16e siècle*. In December 2017, editions from the period 1541–1550 were added, and post-1550 will be added later. All descriptions are based on 'autopsy' (i.e., consultation book-in-hand) of copies present in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. I would like to thank curator Louise Amazan of the Bibliothèque nationale de France for bringing this information to my attention. Unfortunately, it came too late to help with the identification of editions for this survey.

⁵ 'Le premier Robert Estienne a publié plusieurs Catalogues de ses livres, avec leurs prix. J'ai introduit une partie de ces prix dans mes listes; ce sera assez pour donner à connoître quelle étoit alors la valeur des éditions soignées faites à Paris.' [= 'The first Robert Estienne published several catalogues of his books, with their prices. I have included some of these prices in my lists; that will be enough to give an idea of the value of the carefully edited editions printed in Paris'.] Cf. Renouard, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Estienne*, vol. 1, p. 7.

different booksellers' catalogues, this information in Renouard's bibliography can be misleading. The only way to get to the bottom of this is through comparison of all Estienne's booksellers' catalogues with prices for each title.

Another source used for this survey is Schreiber's study on the Estiennes (Schreiber 1982). It is thorough and very useful for the titles included, as it provides full, state-of-the-art bibliographic descriptions, including information about languages, type faces and illustrations; however, it contains only a selection of Robert Estienne's total output.

There is not yet a definitive French online, retrospective bibliography for all pre-1801 handpress books. There is a collective catalogue for France (CFFR), but the quality of the entries therein varies greatly; for accurate bibliographic descriptions of copies created book-in-hand in French holdings, one can use the Sudoc catalogue (<http://en.abes.fr/Sudoc/Sudoc-Catalogue>), but this has several drawbacks. It often contains multiple entries for the same bibliographical unit, entered by different people in different institutions; it is also by no means complete; the authority control, grouping entries of, e.g., one printer/publisher, is weak.

Since 2011, this bibliographical gap has been largely filled very cleverly by the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), an online tool which aims to include all known, pre-1601 editions produced on the Continent as well as in Great Britain. The USTC deliberately presents itself as an 'STC', a short title catalogue: however, it is not in fact a catalogue, because, for example, it goes beyond the usual scope of catalogues, as it also includes 'lost' editions, i.e., editions without any known existing copies. Neither is it a classic bibliography, because it does not systematically include all the usual bibliographic features (bibliographic formats, collations, foliation or pagination statements). And, in the cases when it does do this, it is not clear from which kind of source the information has been derived: actual copies, bibliographies, catalogues, or archival sources, or a combination of those. Unlike most catalogues or bibliographies, the USTC does not make explicit the transcription rules used for titles, authors, and imprints. As a result, this tool, useful as it most certainly is, does not merit the 'STC status' suggested by its name, because it is not clear where the information presented comes from and how it has been processed. In addition, it remains unclear what the status of individual records is (i.e., whether in process, finished, checked), and when information is being updated. As a result, the USTC contains many mistakes, such as duplicate records, and information which is simply wrong or misleading.⁶ Nevertheless, in the absence of similar tools, with the same scope and coverage, it still is a very valuable point of entry. One needs to bear in mind its flaws and double check information in case of doubt. This is sometimes possible by using the links given to digitized copies. In other cases, one has to verify holdings of cited institutions. Fortunately, of all the sections within the USTC, those dealing with French books before 1601 are perhaps the most reliable of all, because they were

⁶ E.g. USTC 203296 gives the format 8vo instead of 4to (compare the copy at Bibliothèque Mazarine, 4° 10125.1); USTC 184446 gives 112 fols. instead of 112, [7], [1 blank] fols. (compare Ph. Renouard, *Bibliographie des éditions de Simon de Colines*, p. 68); USTC 182109 links to a different edition on Google Books (<https://books.google.be/books?id=NA5VAAAAQAAJ&hl=de&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false>) than the one described; USTC 185538 mentions only a number ('109') for the extent, but does not explain whether this number refers to pages or to foliation; many other examples can be found.

composed at the very beginning of the project when the collaborators still processed information almost entirely book-in-hand.

Scholars using the USTC should be aware of its weaknesses and check information whenever doubts arise. Whenever difficulties were encountered, I tried to corroborate information by checking library catalogues and bibliographies, and inspecting digitised copies (mainly those provided by Google Books, the Hathi Trust or the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) or by consultation with colleagues and curators working in library special collections in Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Typical situations leading to the exclusion of datapoints include the following: the data in USTC are too vague on title level, and/or do not include bibliographical formats, reliable foliation or pagination statements. In a number of cases, USTC contains duplicates or produces titles without surviving copies without justification. In some cases information is present but manifestly wrong or confused. Unfortunately, for whatever reasons, it seems that those responsible for the USTC do not always respond when such errors or lacunae are reported to them. For the analysis presented below, I have left out all the datapoints for which information raised doubts or difficulties, reducing the total dataset to 1,087 or 60.36% of the initial corpus. As this may lead to the loss of information on the level of individual records, it is not expected that this will alter the statistical outcomes of this survey.

4. Results

This section provides the following information for each catalogue:

- the total number of entries listed in the catalogue;
- the number of entries which could be identified;
- the number of entries holding all elements needed for the analysis (i.e., bibliographical format, a reliable pagination or foliation statement, and/or a reliable collation formula). Entries leaving room for doubt are excluded.

On the basis of this subset of complete and reliable data, the following information is calculated:

- the average price per sheet (expressed in *deniers tournois*) for the entire subset, followed by the standard deviation between brackets. The standard deviation allows for a better assessment of the fluctuations for the average price per sheet within the subset;
- the average price per sheet according to the age of the editions in the subset. In order to create subsets large enough for statistical comparison, entries were grouped according to decades;
- the average price per sheet according to bibliographical format;

- the average price per sheet for Hebrew books and for Greek books as opposed to the price per sheet of non-Hebrew and non-Greek books;
- the average price per sheet for books which are explicitly labelled as '*libri venales*' (i.e., editions on sale produced by others) as opposed to books not labelled as such (Robert Estienne's 'own' books).

4.1 1541 catalogue

Entries: 222, of which are identified: 166 (USTC: 165, copy in hand: 23)

Entries selected for analysis: 121

Price per sheet: 2.21 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 1.09)

Age: 0 to 40 years old⁷

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 69): 2.49 (st.dev. ± 1.11)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 27): 1.74 (st.dev. ± 0.51)
- Price per sheet Age 21–30 years old (n = 21): 1.86 (st.dev. ± 1.08)
- Price per sheet Age 31–40 years old (n = 3): 2.88 (st. dev. ± 2.71)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 22): 1.88 (st.dev. 0.67)
- Quarto (n = 47): 2.35 (st.dev. 1.22)
- Octavo (n = 50): 2.15 (st.dev. 0.98)
- 16mo (n = 2): 4.52 (st.dev. 2.15)

Hebrew books (n = 17): 3.75 (st.dev. ± 0.90)

Greek books (n = 1): 3.33

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 103): 1.95 (st.dev. ± 0.90)

'Own' editions (n = 75): 2.41 (st.dev. ± 1.00)

⁷ In one case, the year of publication is unclear.

Libri venales (n = 46): 1.89 (st.dev. \pm 1.17)

4.2 [Not before 1542] catalogue, 1st edition

Entries: 254, of which are identified: 157 (USTC: 157; copy in hand: 6)

Entries selected for analysis: 108

Price per sheet: 1.89 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: \pm 0.78)

Age: 0 to 50 years old

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 41): 1.97 (st.dev. \pm 0.52)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 29): 1.82 (st.dev. \pm 0.35)
- Price per sheet Age 21–30 years old (n = 35): 1.76 (st.dev. \pm 0.98)
- Price per sheet Age 31–40 years old (n = 2): 3.71 (st. dev. \pm 3.23)
- Price per sheet Age 41–50 years old (n = 1): 1.85

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 19): 1.62 (st.dev. 0.44)
- Quarto (n = 37): 1.64 (st.dev. 0.56)
- Octavo (n = 49): 2.05 (st.dev. 0.69)
- 16mo (n = 2): 4.50 (st.dev. 2.12)
- 24mo (n = 1): 4.00

‘Own’ editions (n = 57): 1.98 (st.dev. \pm 0.45)

Libri venales (n = 51): 1.80 (st.dev. \pm 1.03)

4.3 [Not before 1542] catalogue, 2nd edition

Entries: 247, of which are identified: 150 (USTC: 150; copy in hand: 6)

Entries selected for analysis: 101

Price per sheet: 1.94 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: \pm 0.88)

Age: 0 to 40 years old

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 43): 2.11 (st.dev. ± 0.80)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 24): 1.81 (st.dev. ± 0.34)
- Price per sheet Age 21–30 years old (n = 31): 1.71 (st.dev. ± 0.97)
- Price per sheet Age 31–40 years old (n = 3): 2.88 (st. dev. ± 2.71)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 17): 1.58 (st.dev. ± 0.38)
- Quarto (n = 35): 1.60 (st.dev. ± 0.46)
- Octavo (n = 46): 2.17 (st.dev. ± 0.92)
- 16mo (n = 2): 4.5 (st.dev. ± 2.12)

‘Own’ editions (n = 55): 2.01 (st.dev. ± 0.54)

Libri venales (n = 46): 1.85 (st.dev. ± 1.17)

4.4 [About 1544] catalogue

Entries: 230, of which are identified: 197 (USTC: 197, copy in hand: 0)

Entries selected for analysis: 166

Price per sheet: 2.52 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 3.70)

Age: 0 to 40 years old

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 96): 2.59 (st.dev. ± 1.01)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 31): 1.99 (st.dev. ± 0.84)
- Price per sheet Age 21–30 years old (n = 26): 1.50 (st.dev. ± 0.53)
- Price per sheet Age 31–40 years old (n = 13): 1.93 (st. dev. ± 1.33)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 32): 1.92 (st.dev. ± 0.98)
- Quarto (n = 63): 2.39 (st.dev. ± 1.23)
- Octavo (n = 68): 2.18 (st.dev. ± 0.65)
- 16mo (n = 1): 6.04
- 24mo (n = 2): 3.97 (st.dev. ± 0.37)

Hebrew books (n = 22): 4.04 (st.dev. ± 0.23)

Greek books (n = 1): 3.00

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 143): 2.28 (st.dev. ± 3.93)

4.5 1546 catalogue

Entries: 229, of which are identified: 186 (USTC: 181, copy in hand: 31)

Entries selected for analysis: 126

Price per sheet: 2.53 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 1.06)

Age: 0 to 20 years old

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 102): 2.73 (st.dev. ± 1.11)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 24): 1.83 (st.dev. ± 0.35)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 11): 2.56 (st.dev. ± 1.39)
- Quarto (n = 39): 3.03 (st.dev. ± 1.11)
- Octavo (n = 65): 2.08 (st.dev. ± 0.41)
- 12mo (n = 1): 2.05
- 16mo (n = 6): 5.87 (st.dev. ± 0.14)
- 24mo (n = 3): 3.50 (st.dev. ± 0.90)

Hebrew books (n = 22): 4.01 (st.dev. ± 0.18)

Greek books (n = 4): 4.00 (st.dev. \pm 1.80)

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 100): 2.20 (st.dev. \pm 0.83)

4.6 [About 1546] catalogue

Entries: 300, of which are identified: 243 (USTC: 243, copy in hand: 2)

Entries selected for analysis: 216

Price per sheet: 2.36 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: \pm 1.40)

Age: 0 to 39 years old

– Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 105): 2.61 (st.dev. \pm 1.69)

– Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 76): 2.36 (st.dev. \pm 0.96)

– Price per sheet Age 21–30 years old (n = 25): 1.46 (st.dev. \pm 0.51)

– Price per sheet Age 31–39 years old (n = 10): 1.89 (st. dev. \pm 1.51)

Bibliographical format:

– Broadsheet (n = 1): 1.00

– Folio (n = 48): 2.65 (st.dev. \pm 2.48)

– Quarto (n = 46): 1.96 (st.dev. \pm 0.82)

– Octavo (n = 105): 2.26 (st.dev. \pm 0.73)

– 16mo (n = 15): 3.36 (st.dev. \pm 1.16)

Hebrew books (n = 0)

Greek books (n = 4): 3.57 (st.dev. \pm 0.54)

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 212): 2.33 (st.dev. \pm 1.40)

Colines editions (n = 187): 2.45 (st.dev. \pm 1.41)

4.7 [About 1547] catalogue

Entries: 27, of which are identified: 20 (USTC: 20; copy in hand: 0)

Entries selected for analysis: 19

Price per sheet: 2.54 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 1.02)

Age: 0 to 10 years old

– Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 19): 2.54 (st.dev. ± 1.02)

Bibliographical format:

– Folio (n = 2): 2.72 (st.dev. ± 1.53)

– Quarto (n = 1): 1.64

– Octavo (n = 13): 2.25 (st.dev. ± 0.31)

– 16mo (n = 3): 3.90 (st.dev. ± 1.82)

Hebrew books (n = 2): 4.33 (st.dev. ± 2.36)

Greek books (n = 4): 2.52 (st.dev. ± 1.07)

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 13): 2.25 (st.dev. ± 0.32)

2.8 [About 1549] catalogue

Entries: 44, of which are identified: 35 (USTC: 35, copy in hand: 0)

Entries selected for analysis: 31

Price per sheet: 2.80 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 0.97)

Age: 0 to 10 years old

– Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 31): 2.80 (st.dev. ± 0.97)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 6): 2.90 (st.dev. ± 0.87)
- Quarto (n = 6): 2.90 (st.dev. ± 0.80)
- Octavo (n = 14): 2.24 (st.dev. ± 0.31)
- 16mo (n = 5): 4.10 (st.dev. ± 1.32)

Hebrew books (n = 4): 3.74 (st.dev. ± 1.53)

Greek books (n = 9): 3.11 (st.dev. ± 0.98)

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 18): 2.43 (st.dev. ± 0.62)

4.9 1552 catalogue

Entries: 248, of which are identified: 233 (USTC: 211, copy in hand: 77)

Entries selected for analysis: 199

Price per sheet: 2.87 *deniers tournois* (standard deviation: ± 1.35)

Age: 0 to 26 years old⁸

- Price per sheet Age 0–10 years old (n = 123): 2.70 (st.dev. ± 1.06)
- Price per sheet Age 11–20 years old (n = 53): 2.83 (st.dev. ± 1.128)
- Price per sheet Age 21–26 years old (n = 13): 1.94 (st.dev. ± 0.38)

Bibliographical format:

- Folio (n = 17): 2.66 (st.dev. ± 1.00)
- Quarto (n = 61): 3.18 (st.dev. ± 1.02)
- Octavo (n = 97): 2.12 (st.dev. ± 0.33)
- 16mo (n = 21): 5.62 (st.dev. ± 1.54)
- 24mo (n = 3): 3.49 (st.dev. ± 0.89)

⁸ In ten cases the year of publication is uncertain.

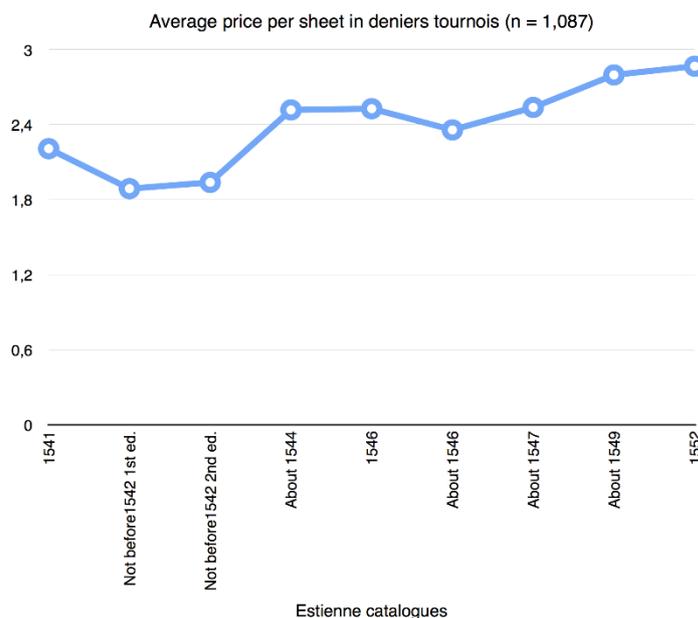
Hebrew books (n = 50): 4.67 (st.dev. \pm 1.25)

Greek books (n = 18): 3.27 (st.dev. \pm 0.90)

Non-Hebrew and non-Greek books (n = 132): 2.13 (st.dev. \pm 0.50)

4.10 Findings

The following five graphs group the main results of these statistical analyses allowing an assessment of the impact of different factors on prices as advertised by Robert Estienne in the period 1541-1552. For the graph showing the average price per sheet according to the age of editions (graph 2), subsets of data under 20 are excluded, but the information can be found in the overview on catalogue level (see above).

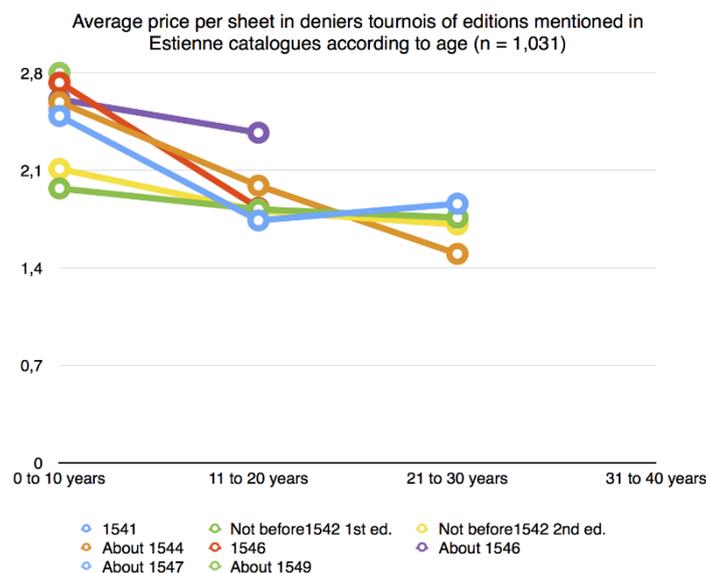


Graph 1. The evolution of the average price per sheet in the period 1541-1552.

The first graph indicates the impact of time on the average price per sheet for books advertised by Robert Estienne. Taking the average price per sheet of the 1541 catalogue as an index, prices increase slowly but steadily over the following eleven years and, by 1552, have risen by 30% (from 2.21 *deniers tournois* to 2.87 *deniers*). Three catalogues do not follow the overall trend: both [Not before 1542]

catalogues as well as the [About 1546] catalogue. Items in the former two catalogues are about 12 to 14% cheaper than those mentioned in the 1541 catalogue. This can be explained when considering another factor influencing price levels, displayed in the following two graphs (Graphs 2 and 3).

The difference between the [About 1546] catalogue and those listed just before and after is not very dramatic: only about 7%. The 1546 catalogue contains a fairly large number of Hebrew books (22) in addition to four Greek books – two categories of books with high prices per sheet (see below, Graph 5). The [About 1546] catalogue does not list any Hebrew books, which probably explains the lower average price per sheet across all items.

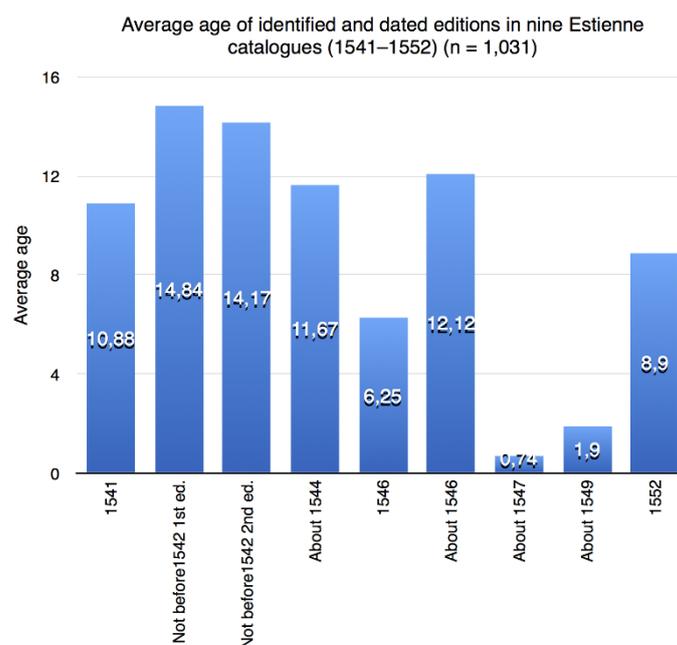


Graph 2. The average price per sheet according to the age of advertised editions

Graph 2 clearly indicates that old(er) editions are cheaper than new(er) editions in *deniers tournois* per sheet. In 1541, books in the subset of editions 11 to 20 years old are about 30% cheaper than books 0 to 10 years old. The differences between those two groups are even more important in the 1546 catalogue (about 33%), but smaller in the two editions of the [Not before 1542] catalogues, the [About 1544] and the [About 1546] catalogues. In those catalogues, average prices per sheet differ between books 0 to 10 years old and books 11 to 20 years old between 8 and 23%.

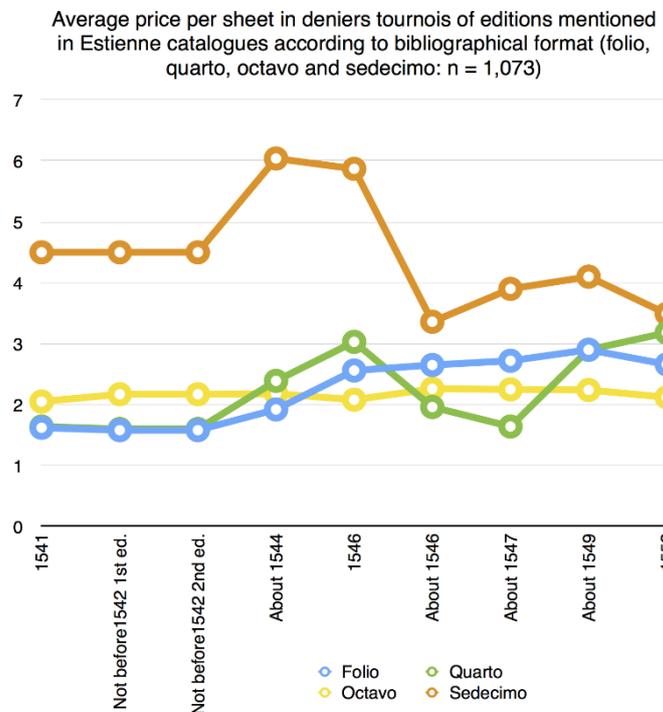
The difference with books more than 20 years old is less clearcut. Although they are always cheaper than books 0 to 10 years old, the differences vary widely. The third group (21–30 years old) is only slightly cheaper in two editions of the [Not before 1542] catalogue (-3% and -4% compared to the second group of books 11 to 20 years old). In the [About 1544] catalogue, the difference is very important: books in the third age group cost 42% less compared to those in the first age group. In contrast, in the 1541 catalogue books more than 21 years old become slightly more expensive (+4%)

than those between 11 and 20 years old. This does not seem to be logical but can probably be attributed to a limited number of outliers as well as to the limited size of this group ($n = 21$).



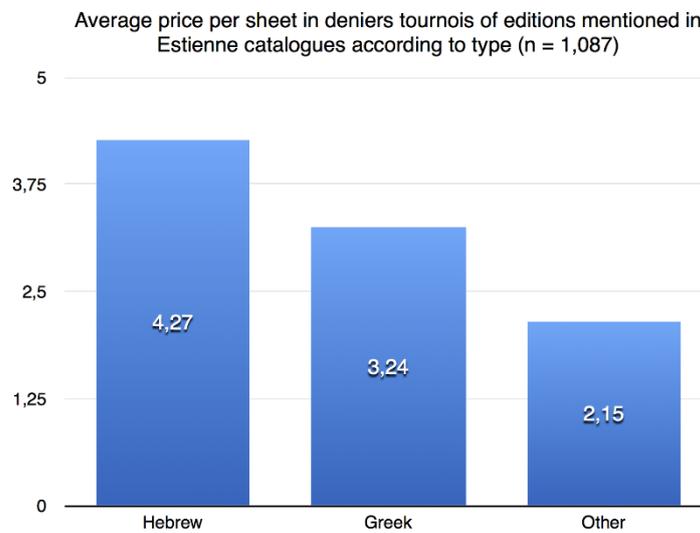
Graph 3. The average age of editions advertised in the different catalogues

The third graph helps to explain the two dips in the first one. It gives the overall average age of all editions listed per catalogue. Books in the two [Not before 1542] catalogues and in the [About 1546] catalogue are, in comparison to the catalogues published just before and after, considerably older. As explained above, older books are substantially cheaper, which helps to explain why graph 1 shows dips in 1542 and 1546. As mentioned before, the absence of items in Hebrew probably has a great impact on average prices per sheet in the latter catalogue (compare Graph 5).



Graph 4. The average price per sheet according to bibliographical format

A third factor influencing price levels is the bibliographic format of editions on sale. All formats show important fluctuations which may have to do with varying dates of publications (new versus old books), varying languages (see above) or other factors not surveyed here (e.g., editions printed in black and red, illustrated editions). In any case, one trend stands out: the small sedecimo format is considerably more expensive than larger bibliographical formats. This *enchiridii forma*, as 16mo is sometimes referred to in the catalogues, is marketed as a handy pocket book, the production of which is more difficult for compositors as they have to handle very small type.



Graph 5. The average price per sheet according to language/type (as referred to in the catalogues)

The final chart in this section singles out editions in Hebrew and Greek, for which special type is used, and which requires compositors and proofreaders able to read these languages. Compared to books not featuring these exotic types in the catalogue descriptions, Greek books are 51% more expensive and books in Hebrew on average 99% more expensive.

5. Price evolution across catalogues

The 1,087 catalogue entries selected for analysis in this survey correspond to 598 different entries in USTC, of which 505 were useful for further study. As a result, a number of catalogue entries refer to identical editions, allowing an assessment of price differences across catalogues.

Surprisingly, there is only a small proportion of all cases where two, or in one case, three, different prices for one edition are advertised. Table 1 gives an overview of the distribution of catalogue entries and editions as recorded by USTC.

Table 1. Distribution of editions and catalogue entries

Editions mentioned in 1 catalogue:	244 (= 51.68% on a total of 505 editions)
Editions mentioned in 2 catalogues:	91; same price: 83, different price: 6

Editions mentioned in 3 catalogues:	74; same price: 70, different price: 4
Editions mentioned in 4 catalogues:	38; same price: 32, different price: 6
Editions mentioned in 5 catalogues:	37; same price: 27, different price: 10
Editions mentioned in 6 catalogues:	21; same price: 13, different price: 8

Table 2 lists all 34 cases in which more than one price was advertised.

Table 2. Different prices advertised in Estienne catalogues

Nr.	Entry (cited according to the earliest entry)	Price 1	Price 2
<i>Different prices recorded in 2 catalogues</i>			
1	Peri Archon (id est de principiis) scientiarum: quæ in Dialectices inquiri solent, breuiter & artificiose complectens (About 1544, fol. B4r; USTC 144163)	About 1544: 6 d.	About 1546: 12 d. (+ 100%)
2	Theodoriti Cyre[n]sis Episcopi de Curatione Græcaru[m] affectionu[m] libri duodecim, Zenobio Acciaiolo interprete (About 1544, fol. A4v; USTC 145021)	About 1544: 84 d.	About 1546: 96 d. (+ 14%)
3	Galenii de differentijs febrium libri duo, Laure[n]tio Florentino interprete (About 1544, fol. A7r; USTC 146862)	About 1544: 24 d.	About 1546: 30 d. (+ 25%)
4	Expositio in quinquagesimum psalmum, cuius principum, Miserere mei Deus, &c. (About 1544, fol. A3r; USTC 184322)	About 1544: 12 d.	About 1546: 8 d. (- 33%)
5	Ioannis Fernelij Ambianatis Monolosphærium, partibus quatuor. Prima, generalis horarij & structuram, & usum, [...] (About 1544, fol. B1v; USTC 184658)	About 1544: 60 d.	About 1546: 8 d. (- 87%)
6	Seminarium, siue plantarium (Not before 1542, 1st ed. fol. A5v, USTC 79706)	Not before 1542 1st ed.: 15 d.	Not before 1542 2nd ed.: 16 d. (+ 7%)
<i>Different prices recorded in 3 catalogues</i>			
7	De vita & moribus sacerdotum (Not before 1542, 1st ed. fol. A7v, USTC 145230)	Not before 1542 1st ed.: 36 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 24 d. (- 33%)
8	Liber Paralipomenon (About 1544, fol. A2r; USTC 153739)	About 1544: 84 d.	1546 & 1552: 90 d. (+ 7%)

9	Modus examinandæ co[n]structionis, authore Pellisone, recognitus & auctus, paruo & magno volumine (1541, fol. a5v; USTC 88461)	1541 & Not before 1542 2nd ed.: 4 d.	Not before 1542 1st ed.: 6 d. (+ 50%)
10	La maniere de tourner en langue Fra[n]coise les verbes actifz, passifz, gero[n]difs, supins, & participes [...] (1541, fol. a5v; USTC 41237)	1541: 6 d.	About 1544 & 1546: 4 d. (- 33%)
<i>Different prices recorded in 4 catalogues</i>			
11	De oratore libellus minutis characteribus (Not before 1542, 2nd ed. fol. A3r, USTC 147183)	Not before 1542 2nd ed., 1546 & 1552: 20 d.	About 1544: 240 d. (+ 1100%) [‘20 s.’ probably for 20 d.]
12	M.T. Ciceronis opera, ex Petri Victorii codicibus maxima ex parte descripta, viri docti [...] (1541, fol. a3r; USTC 147668)	1541, About 1544 & 1546: 1200 d.	1552: 240 d. (- 80%)
13	Lazari Bayfij annotationes in L.ij. de Captiuus, & postliminio reuersis. In quibus tractatur de Re nauali [...] (About 1544, fol. A5v; USTC 150155)	About 1544 & 1546: 108 d.	About 1549 & 1552: 120 d. (+ 11%)
14	Apologetica deceptatio Petri Brissoti, de venæ sectione (N.b. 1542 1st ed., fol. A6v; USTC 180973)	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 36 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 30 d. (- 17%)
15	De re hortensi (1541, fol. a4v; USTC 80808)	1541 & About 1544: 18 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 15 d. (- 17%)
16	De re vestiaria & de vasculis (1541, fol. a4v; USTC 88432)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 18 d.	About 1544: 10 d. (- 44%)
<i>Different prices recorded in 5 catalogues</i>			
17	De legibus libellus Phil. Melancht. (1541, fol. a6v; USTC 138226)	1541, Not before 1542 2nd ed., 1546 & About 1546: 8 d.	Not before 1542 1st ed.: 6 d. (- 25%)
18	Quintilianus (N.b. 1542 1st ed., fol. A5v; USTC 140673)	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 180 d.	About 1544, 1546 & 1552: 144 d. (- 20%)
19	Astrologiæ defensio Alberti Pighii (1541, fol. a7r; USTC 145490)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 24 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 36 d. (+ 50%)
20	Oratio pro Milone (1541, fol. a3v; USTC 146655)	1541, Not before 1542 2nd ed., About 1544 & 1546: 6 d.	Not before 1542 1st ed.: 8 d. (+ 33%)
21	Officioru[m] libri III. Cato maior, uel De Senectute: Lælius, uel de Amicitia. Paradoxa Stoicorum VI [...]	About 1544 & 1546: 30 d.	About 1547, About 1549 & 1552: 36 d. (+ 20%)

	(About 1544, fol. A6r; USTC 149044)		
22	Eiusdem [= Despauterii] rudimenta (1541, fol. a5v; USTC 181701)	1541, Not before 1542 2nd ed. & 1552: 8 d.	Not before 1542 1st ed. & 1546: 6 d. (- 25%)
23	De puritate conceptionis Mariæ, & de Assumptione eiusdem (1541, fol. a7v; USTC 181818)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 30 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 24 d. (- 20%)
24	Decimationes Plautinæ Buschii (1541, fol. a7r; USTC 184121)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 8 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 12 d. (+ 50%)
25	Galenii commentarium de dissectione venarum arteriarumque (1541, fol. a7v; USTC 184561)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 12 d.	About 1544 & About 1546: 8 d. (- 33%)
26	Alanus in Cantica canticorum (1541, fol. a7r; USTC 186844)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed. & About 1546: 54 d.	About 1544: 42 d. (- 22%)
<i>Different prices recorded in 6 catalogues</i>			
27	De figuris verboru[m] & sente[n]tiaru[m] liber, Rutilii Lupi & alioru[m] veteru[m] authorum (1541, fol. a6r; USTC 140154)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 12 d.	About 1544, 1546 & 1552: 10 d. (- 17%)
28	Epistolæ Plinii Iunioris cu[m] Panægyrico & libello de viris illustribus (1541, fol. a4v; USTC 146040)	1541, Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 72 d.	About 1544, 1546 & 1552: 78 d. (+ 8%)
29	Boetius de differentiis Topicis (1541, fol. a4r; USTC 147221)	1541, About 1544, 1546 & 1552: 10 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 12 d. (+ 20%)
30	Digestoru[m] seu Pandectaru[m] libri L. in quinque tomos secti, & veterum exemplariu[m] collatione restituti. Primus (1541, fol. a6v; USTC 145842)	1541, About 1546, 1546 & 1552: 96 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 90 d. (- 6%)
31	Digestoru[m] seu Pandectaru[m] libri L. in quinque tomos secti, & veterum exemplariu[m] collatione restituti. Quartus (1541, fol. a6v; USTC 184759)	1541, About 1546, 1546 & 1552: 72 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 60 d. (- 17%)
32	Digestoru[m] seu Pandectaru[m] libri L. in quinque tomos secti, & veterum exemplariu[m] collatione restituti. Quintus (1541, fol. a6v; USTC 184760)	1541, About 1546, 1546 & 1552: 102 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 90 d. (- 12%)
33	Oratio pro Archia poeta, Pro M. Fo[n]teio (1541, fol. a3v; USTC 186175)	1541, About 1546, 1546 & 1552: 8 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 6 d. (- 25%)

34	Eiusde[m] [= Jean Pellison] rudime[n]ta recognita ab ipso (1541, fol. a5v; USTC 186076)	1541: 18 d.	Not before 1542 1st & 2nd ed.: 24 d. (+ 33%) About 1544, 1546 & 1552: 20 d. (- 11%)
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Approximately half of the titles in the nine Estienne catalogues which have been identified and for which enough information about prices and printing sheets is present appear only once in this dataset. The other half of those titles appear twice or more, allowing an assessment of the evolution of price levels between 1541 and 1552. In 46 cases out of a total of 261, prices are given for both extreme years of the dataset; in the other cases, intervals are less than eleven years.

In 86.21% of the cases where two or more prices for a given title are known, price levels remain stable. In 34 cases only (13.02%), there is a difference in price between one catalogue and others. Details are listed in Table 2. The first column holds a diplomatic transcription of the earliest entry, which is followed by a reference to the source and USTC number. The second column cites sources in chronological order and the price cited therein. The third column mentions different prices and refers to the catalogues in which they are present, again in chronological order. The difference between initial prices and later prices is expressed in per cent, here for readability rounded up to the nearest unit. One title only is found with three different prices (no. 34); in all other cases there are only two different prices.

In a few cases differences in price are so extreme that it can be presumed that a mistake of some sort is involved (no. 11). In other cases, prices increase by 100% or decrease by a third compared to the earlier prices (see, for example, nos. 4 and 1 respectively). Sometimes differences are minimal, both in nominal and relative terms (e.g., no. 6). In most cases (28 out of 34) the relative difference between the earlier and the later price fluctuates between -44% to +50%; larger differences are likely to be mistakes, confusions or outliers. In 19 cases, prices drop, compared with 15 cases, in which higher prices are advertised.

There does not emerge a clearcut pattern in price differences. The number of editions for which price differences are present is low. A case-by-case analysis could probably shed more light on factors affecting changes in prices, but that is beyond the scope of this contribution.

6. Conclusion

This statistical analysis of nine booksellers' catalogues of Robert Estienne published in Paris between 1541 and 1552 reveals a number of important trends and tendencies. First of all, it is obvious that printers and publishers considered the price of books primarily in terms of price per sheet. As price levels in general went up, the price per sheet increased as well, and this can be detected in fairly brief periods of time, as in case, spanning eleven years only – the oldest catalogue being published in 1541, the newest in 1552.

Second, the price of books fluctuates according to the age of the edition on sale. In general, books more than a decade old were cheaper than those printed more recently. I would like to suggest that

books maintained, in general, the same nominal price during their entire waiting time in the warehouse and that booksellers did not adapt those prices to rising living costs, wages or inflation. This is not to say that there were no exceptions, but this is in my view the pattern which emerges from this survey as well as from other surveys carried out on archival documents of the Officina Plantiniana in Antwerp for the period 1580-1655 (Proot 2016; Proot 2017).

Two further factors have an important impact on the price per sheet: the bibliographical format on the one hand, and books in 'exotic' or learned types such as Hebrew and Greek on the other. Editions printed in the small sedecimo format can cost twice and even three times as much as editions in more usual formats (folio, quarto or octavo). Here I suggest there are two important reasons: one which has to do with the difficulties of handling the small type usually used for those editions and its cost, and one which is probably linked with marketing. Higher prices per sheet probably compensated for higher composition costs; in addition, purchasers were charged higher prices (calculated per sheet) than usual, probably as a recompensation for the small format and its portability.

That higher prices were asked for books in Hebrew and Greek does not come as a surprise. Not only was the type for those editions more exclusive and difficult to handle, but also, its readership was somewhat exclusive: the people wanting to buy those books belonged to the upper (intellectual) levels of society. If they needed those books, the price was comparatively unimportant.

Future analyses of other Paris booksellers' catalogues from the same period could no doubt prove or disprove these findings; more detailed, case-by-case analyses, should also consider subject matter and specific characteristics of editions, such as the use of a second printing colour and illustrations.

To conclude: it is hoped that similar datasets for books from other regions will help us better understand mechanisms of the book trade between centers of book production and consumption.

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