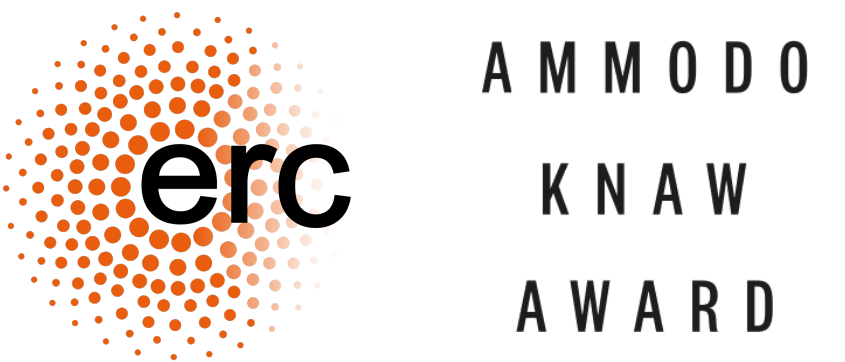




Presented by:
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dr. Juliette Reboul
Anna de Wilde, MA

Printed Catalogues of Private Libraries as a Source for European Book History

MEDIATE: Middlebrow Enlightenment, Disseminating Ideas, Authors and Texts in Europe 1665-1830 PI: Prof. Alicia Montoya



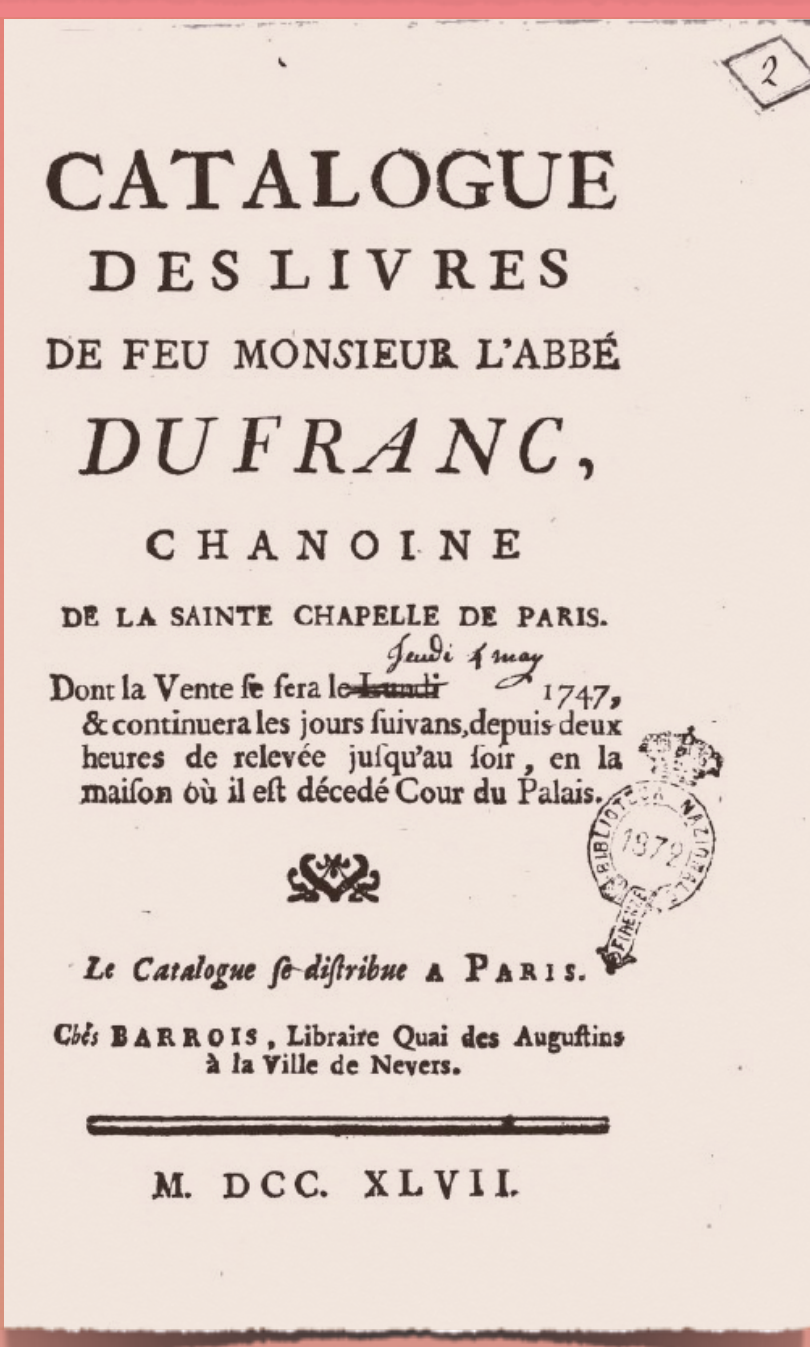
Corpus and method

<p>Sources Sales/Domestic/Memorial Catalogues</p> <p>The function and nature of catalogues of private libraries may evolve from their original use, being repurposed as bibliographical references or price guides.</p>	<p>Regions The British Isles / The Dutch Republic / France</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Metropolitan/ Provincial/ Colonial Networks</p> <p>Transnational perspective on the circulation of books and ideas.</p>	<p>1665-1830 The Age of Enlightenment?</p> <p>Such periodisation reflects a realistic starting date for the spread of Enlightenment ideas and an approximate date marking both the end of a political era and the start of a new printing revolution.</p>	<p>Big Data</p> <p>With thousands of catalogues and millions of individual book copies, the data must be processed through a purpose-built database. Transcriptions of catalogues have been initially outsourced, and are curated by the research group.</p>
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Delimiting

- what,
- where,
- when &
- how?

Harvesting data on a large scale

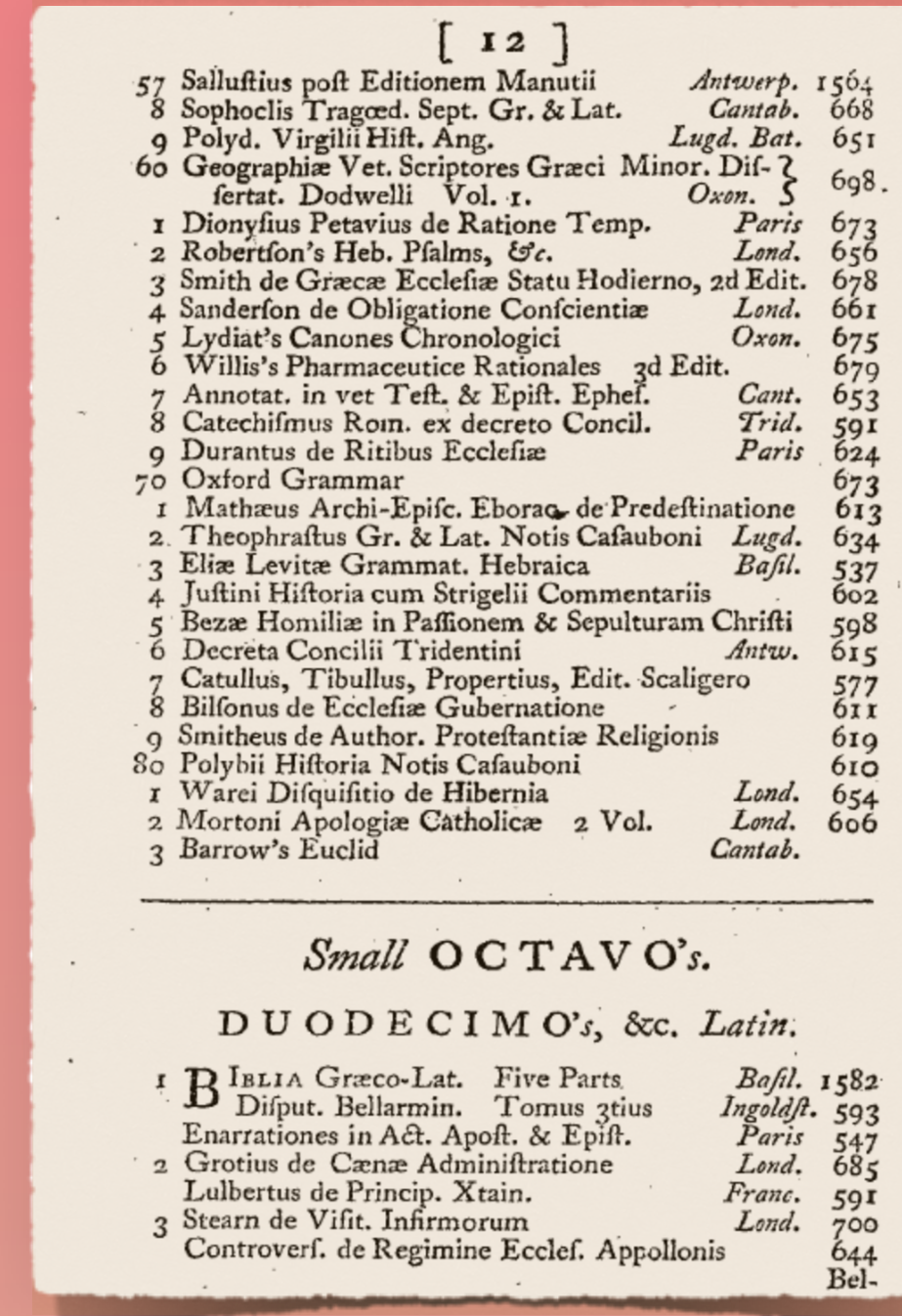


Owners and Sellers

Title pages often provide facts about the owners of libraries, such as their **names, addresses** and **professions**.

In sales catalogues **sought-after genres/items** and **precious books** can figure in a predominant position alongside other **commercial** information.

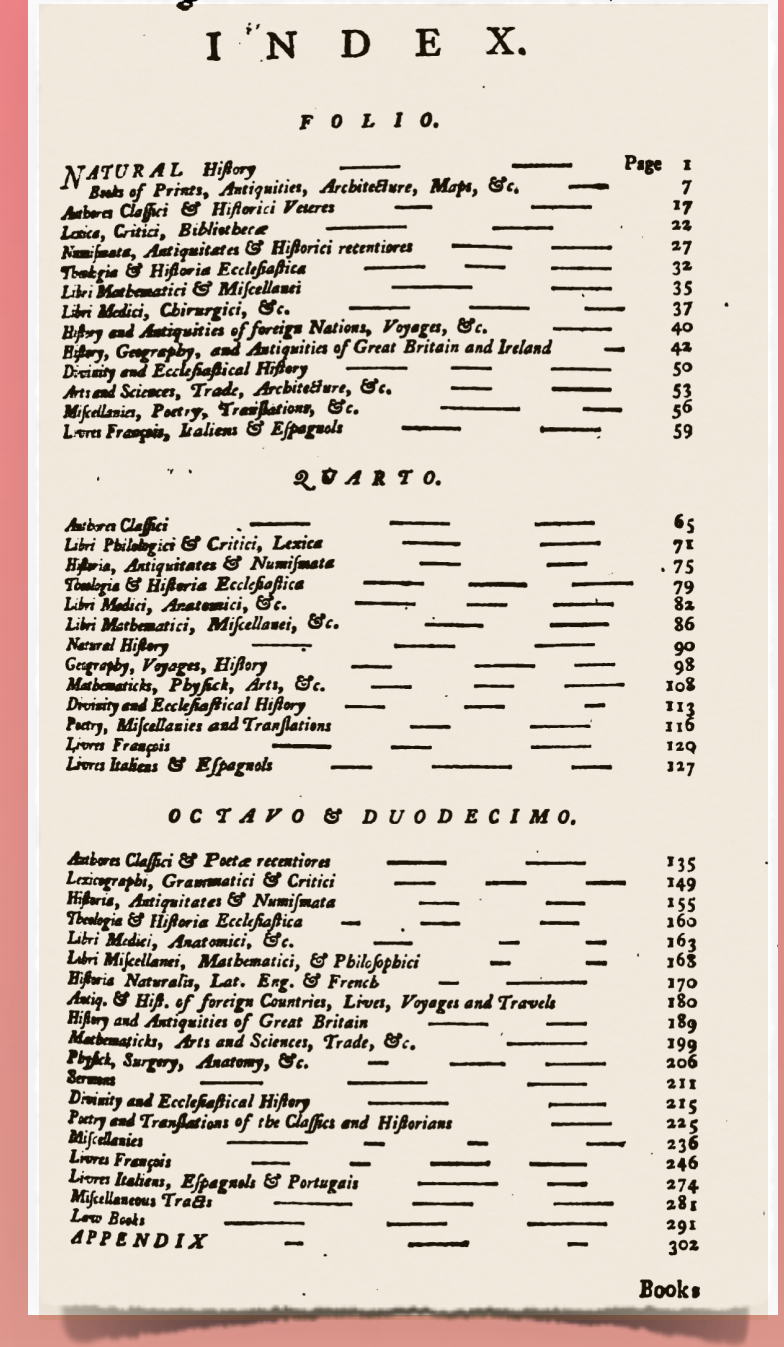
Standardised and carefully curated, these data provide a stable base for **prosopographical** studies on library owners and readers, as well as the study of consumerism and the book trade.



Bibliographical Data

Catalogues of private libraries list titles allegedly owned by an individual. Other data might include **names of authors** and **translators, languages**, number of **volumes** and **format**, as well as the **place** and **year** of publication. The name of the publisher is not always recorded.

Additional information can relate to a unique copy such as the **quality of the binding** and **paper**, the presence of **annotations** and **distinctive marks**.



Categorising Books

Books can be listed according to their **format, language**, and under a **theme** defined by the owner or the seller. Indexes are rare.

One title can appear in several catalogues yet be classified under different headings, revealing subtle **chronological and geographical variations** in its reception.

Categories vary throughout the period, some disappearing and others responding to new literary requirements.

Identifying

- agents,
- events,
- works &
- categories.

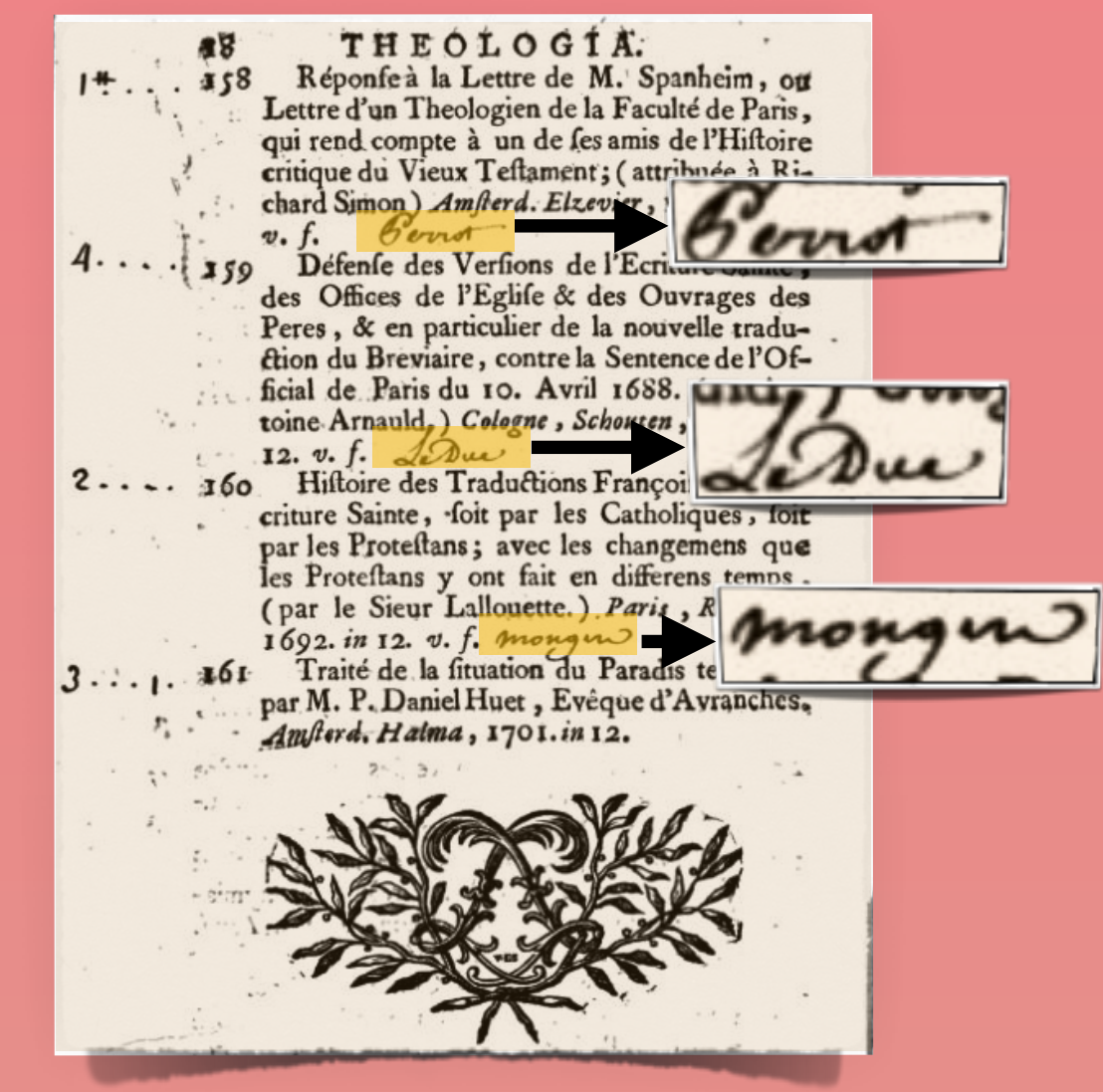
Challenges and constraints

Handwritten Prices

Often reported in the **margins** of catalogues or **interleaved** pages in catalogues, these values present several difficulties:

- a same item in two unique copies of a single catalogue may have been assigned **different prices**;
- due to regional diversity, prices refer to **differing monetary systems**.

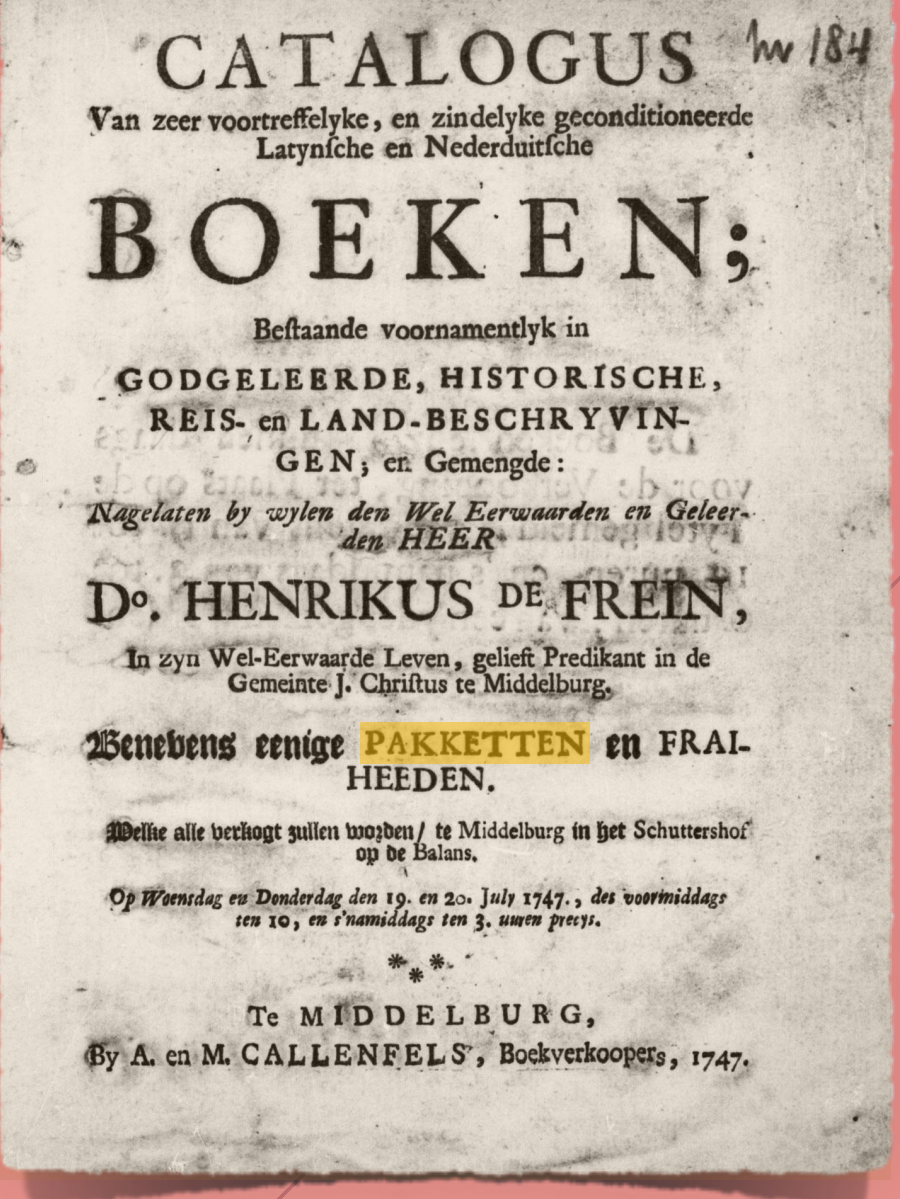
Variations in prices could reveal long-term **evolutions** and **trends** in reading tastes and buying practices.



Missing Books and Seller Stocks

Books listed in sales catalogues might not always represent complete private collections. Not systematically mentioned, **omissions were common** since owners/heirs retained certain books. Despite repressive legislation in some European countries, it was not unusual for booksellers to **incorporate parts of their own stock** in sales catalogues.

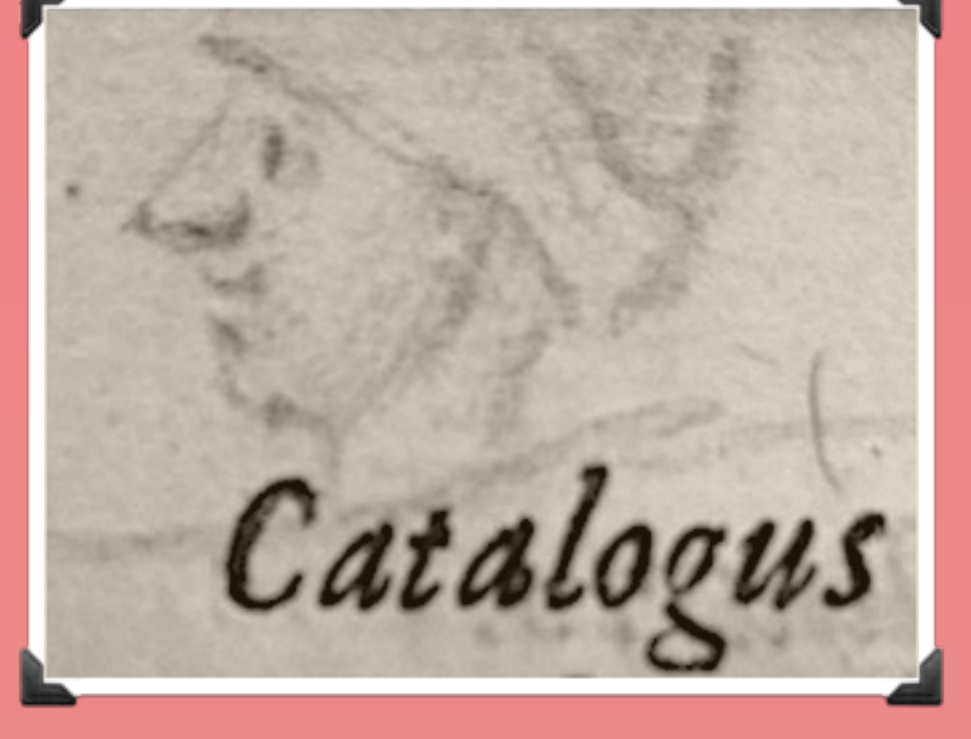
In the case of **secret sales**, titles have known to be **added in manually** after the catalogue was printed.



Scripts and Languages

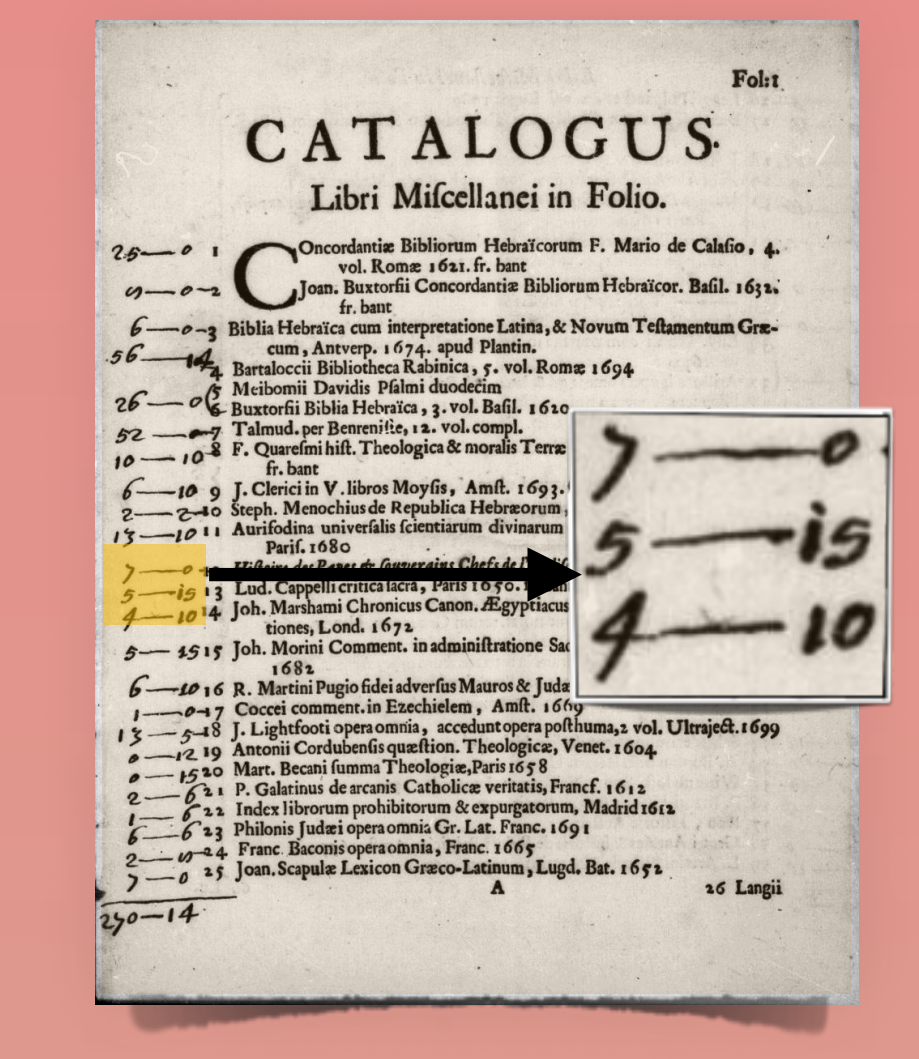
From the long term and transnational approach of this project, typographic differences are inevitably encountered:

- If not transliterated in the text, titles in Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic or Devanagari are to be transcribed in their original alphabet.
- The Gothic typeface will not warrant transcription.



Illustrations, Printer's marks and Doodles

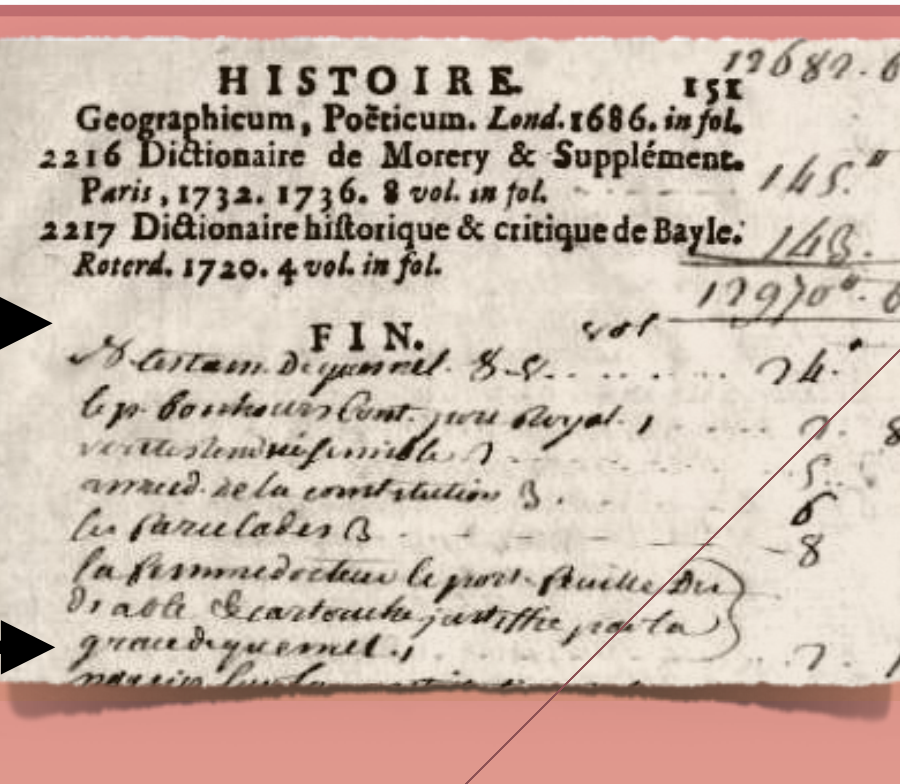
These will be collected but not recorded in a database.



Scrawled Names

Names of buyers at auctions are sometimes reported next to the item they bought. These appear to be either **booksellers** or **private individuals**.

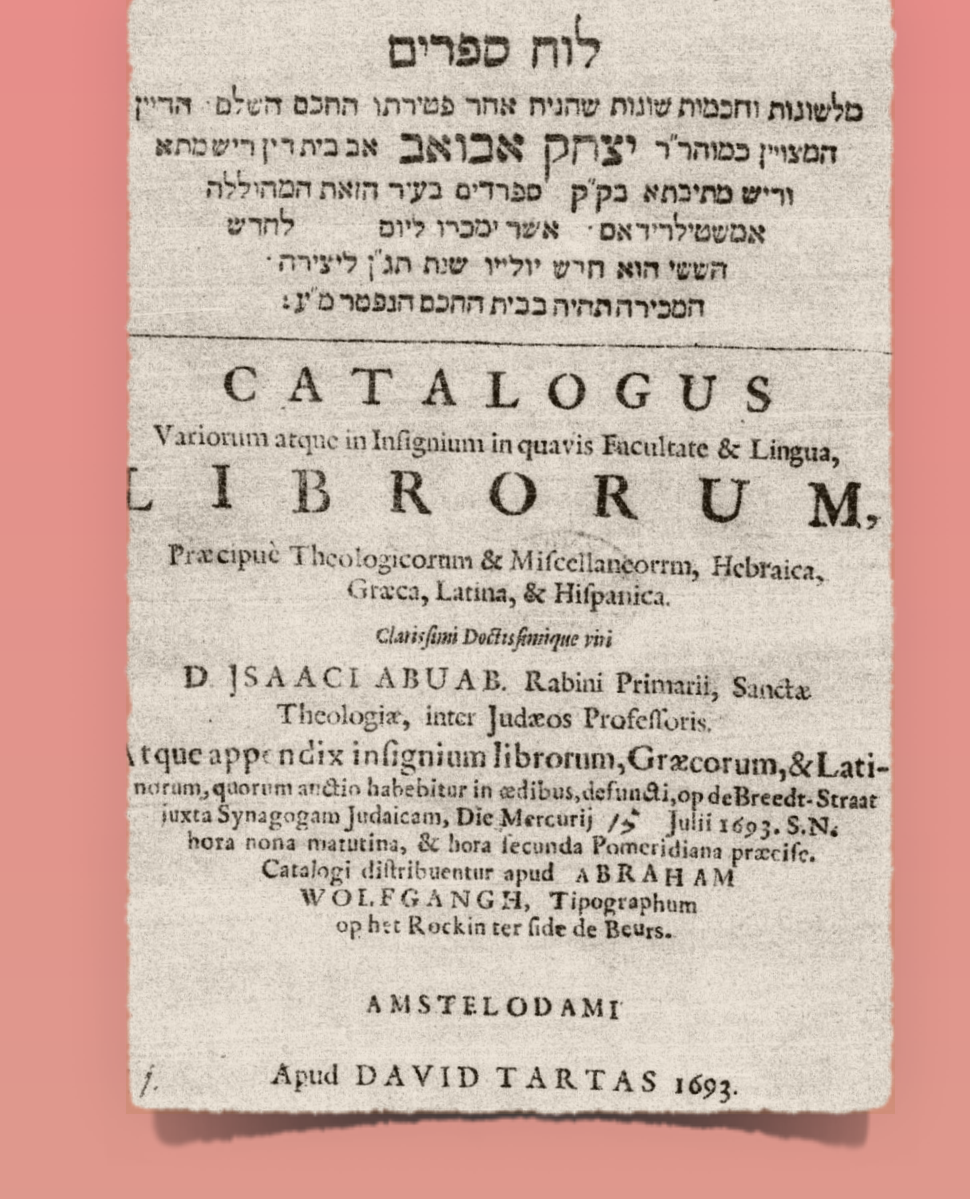
This insight into the second-hand book trade might be of particular interest for **provenance studies**.



Miscellaneous Books and Packets

Items of **lower value** can be reported as bundles or packets of unnamed titles.

These data provide no discernable indication of title or quantity.

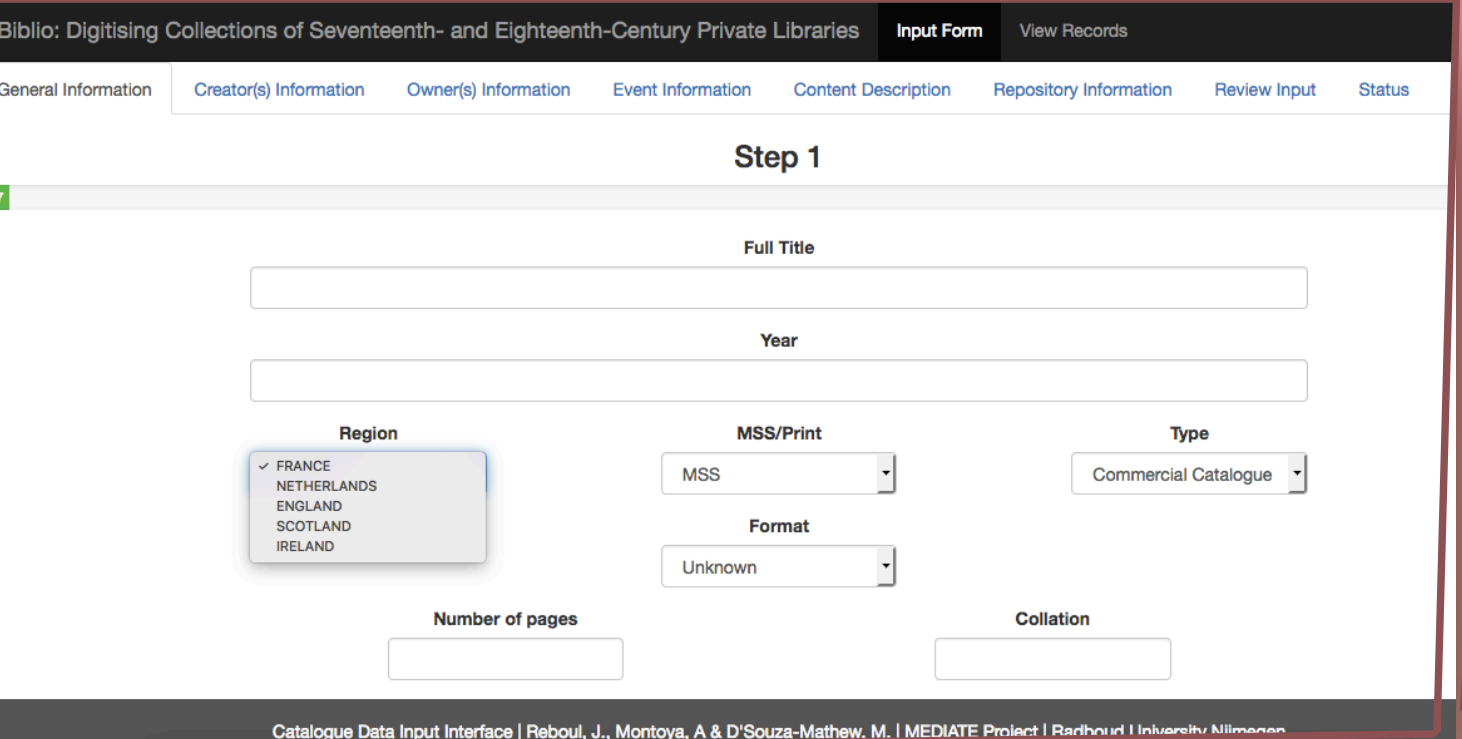


Recording

- prices,
- buyers,
- annotations,
- books added & removed,
- scripts & typefaces,
- untitled books &
- images.

BIBLIO database

Bibliography of Individually-owned Book and Library inventories online

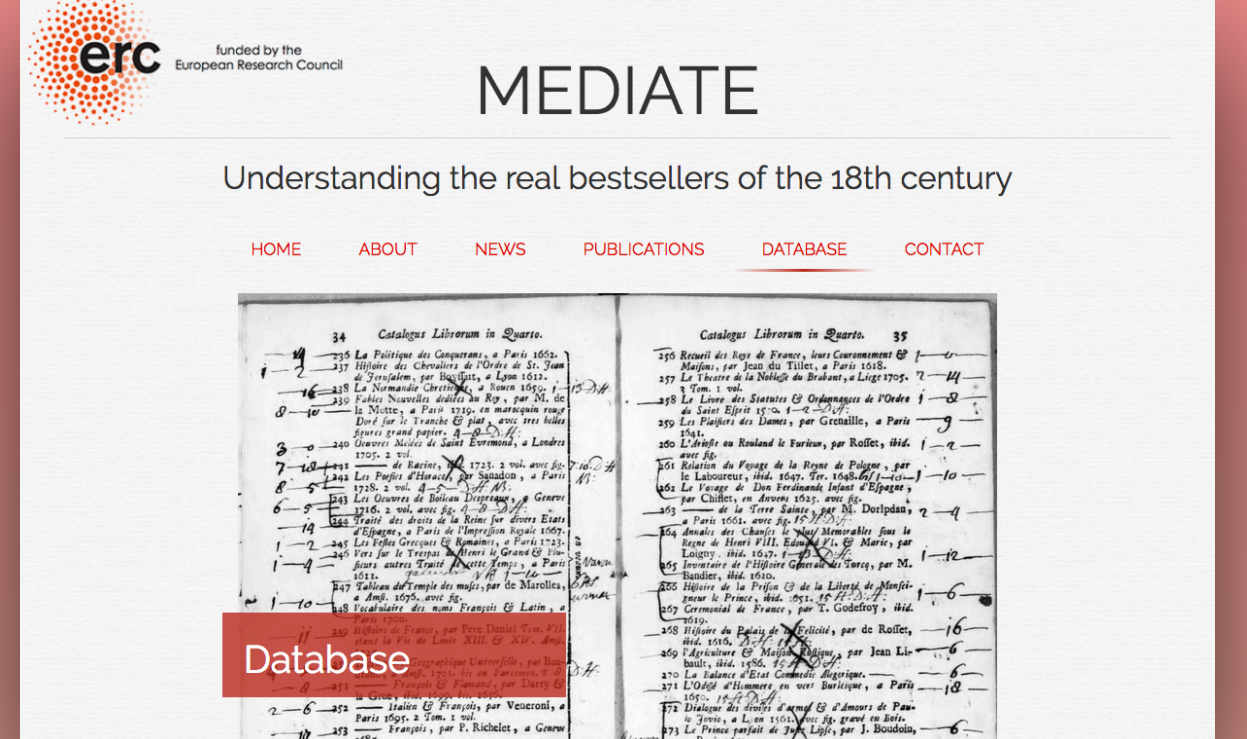


Comparable records for all known private library (sales) catalogues in the regions, including when available:

- Bibliographical description of the catalogue
- Basic information on owner(s)
- Sales details
- Basic description of the content (number of items, presence of preface, index, appendix)
- Location of surviving copies and links to digital ones

MEDIATE database

Understanding the real bestsellers of the 18th century



- **Open-access** and **fully searchable** text files of **transcriptions** and book data extracted from a corpus of 2000-3000 catalogues
- Precise and **linked data** on works, editions and owners allowing for statistical studies
- **Interoperable** with other existing bibliographic and bibliometrics databases => towards the construction of a common interface to study the 'life-cycle of books'

Renewing the narrative of Enlightenment through the study of catalogues?

Revealing best-sellers: A data-driven and large-scale study can reveal the **frequency of titles by now-forgotten authors** on eighteenth-century readers' bookshelves. An empirical research introducing the perspective of the reception of texts and ideas directly questions accepted theories on **18th century European cultural mainstream**.

The "Middlebrow" hypothesis: Preliminary studies point out to an extensive body of **commercial, pedagogical, popularising** and often **religiously-tinted** writings (i.e. "middlebrow"). Can we assume that these texts played a key role in **transmitting Enlightenment ideas** among European reading audiences and that they participated in **shaping new sets of cultural attitudes**?

Partners

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