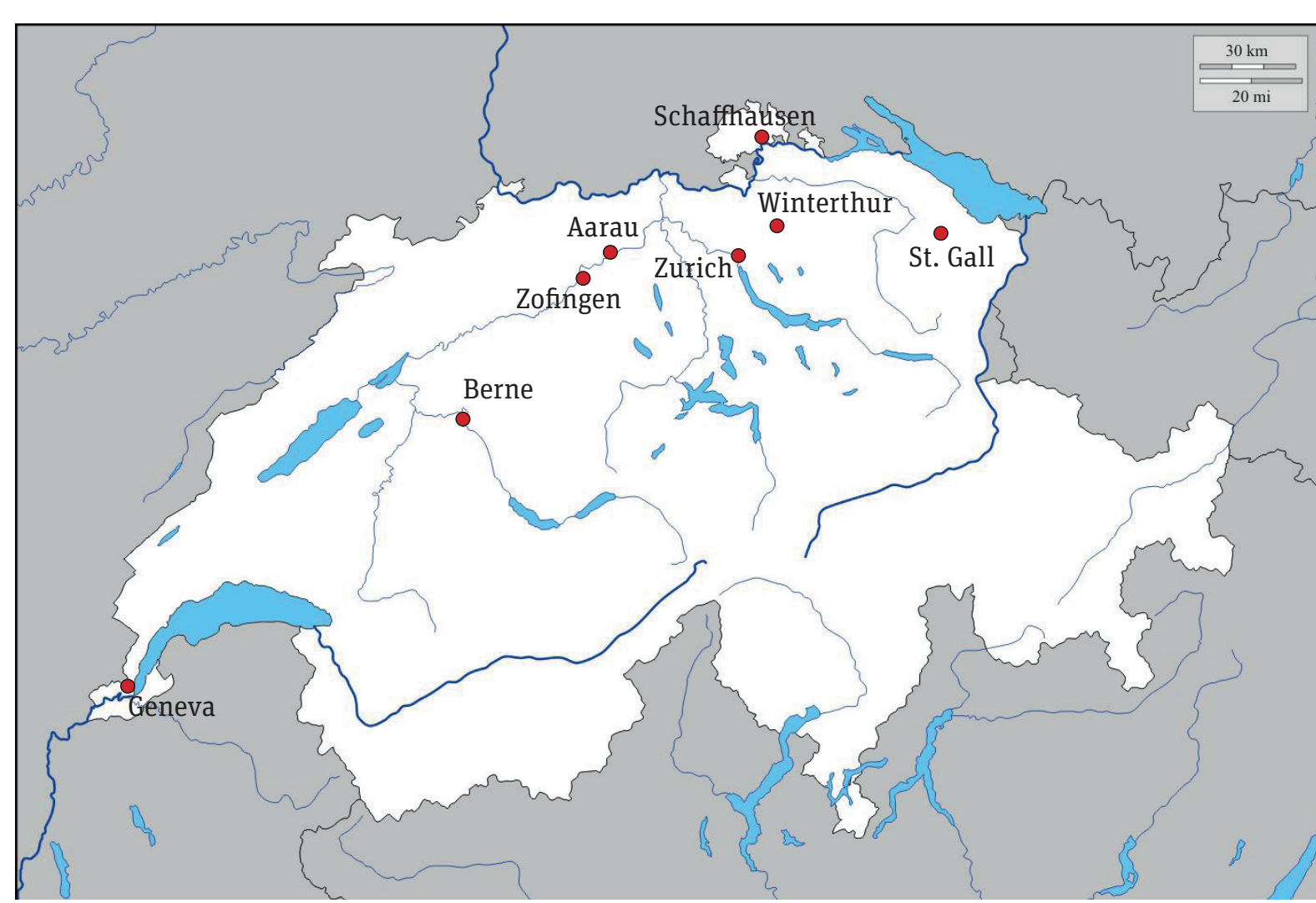


The Donation Books of Swiss Public Libraries of the 17th and 18th Centuries



Introduction



Donation Books of public libraries in Switzerland, 17th – 18th century

Donation books such as the one of the first public library of Zurich are handwritten catalogues recording books, objects and money donated to an institution. Unlike accession books most donation books are extensively illustrated as they were intended not only to be presented to notable visitors but also to express gratitude to the donors' generosity in perpetuating the memory of their donations. At least within Switzerland, these manuscripts are a cultural phenomenon of the 17th and 18th centuries and they are mostly found in evangelical cities where a public library had been founded during that time.



The donation book (1629-1769) of the Zurich public library

The donation book of the Zurich public library contains meticulous records of more than 3300 donations from more than 700 private citizens and from 215 foreign visitors, usually mentioning their status and frequently including a painted coat of arms. The donations and gifts consist mostly of printed books.

Who were the donators and what does the donation book reveal?

Scholars, politicians, merchants, ambassadors from Venice, England and other territories, as well as refugees from France and Savoy donated books. The Zurich donation book is an interesting source of information not only for provenance history, but also for researchers of cultural and social history, as a look at the donors recorded reveals numerous social connections. For instance, a fascinating gift economy can be observed or anonymous works can be attributed to their authors.

Examples from the Zurich donation book



Coat of arms and record of Henri de Rohan, mentioning his status and his donations.

Henri II. de Rohan schenkt am 10. September 1632
Biblia Hebraica, mit Masora Magna und Masora Parva, Handschrift auf Pergament, 14./15. Jh.
Signatur: Ms Or 152

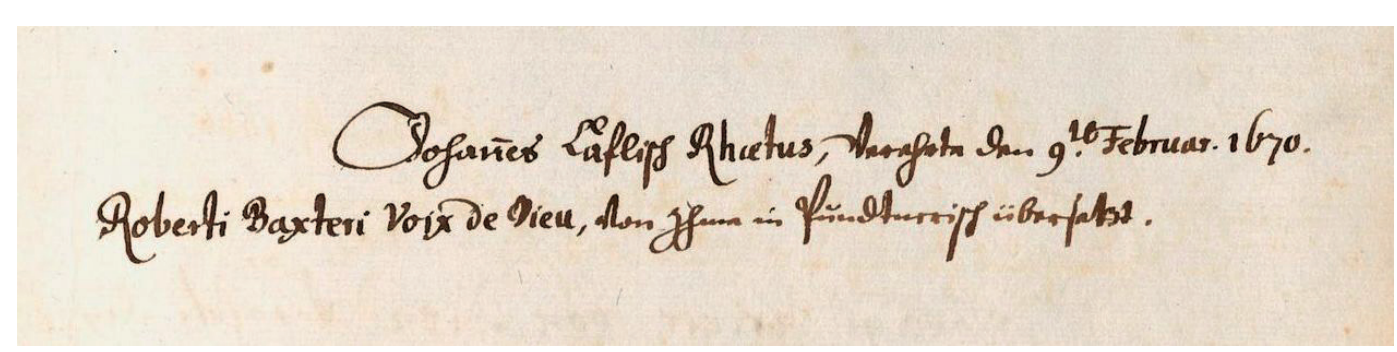
Ein Porträt von Henri II. de Rohan und zwei Wappen.

1637
Henri II. de Rohan: Le parfait Capitaine. Paris: Houzé, 1636.
Signatur: L 115

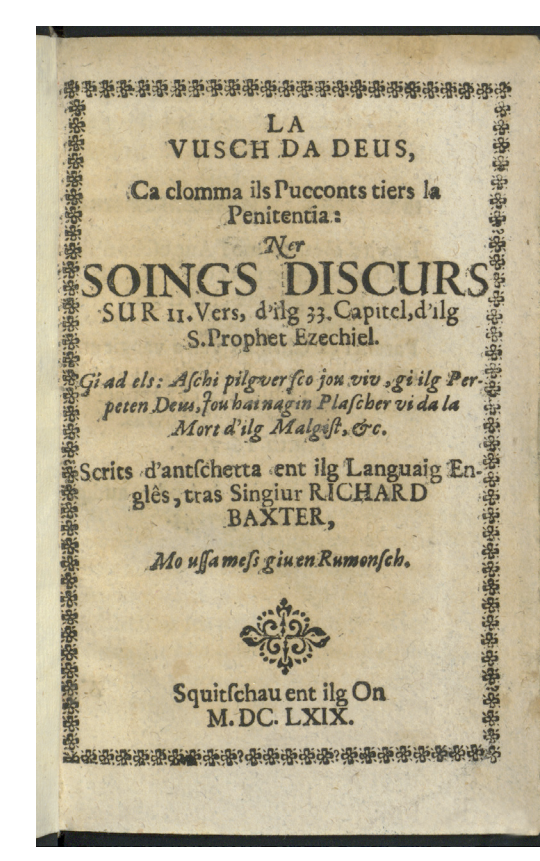


The extant Hebrew manuscript in Zentralbibliothek Zürich.

Who translated Richard Baxter's A Call to the Unconverted into Rhaeto-Romanic?



The record in the Zurich donation book: „Johannes Cafilisch verehrte den 9.ten Februar 1670 Roberti Baxteri Voix de Dieu, von jhme in Pündtnerisch übersetzt.“

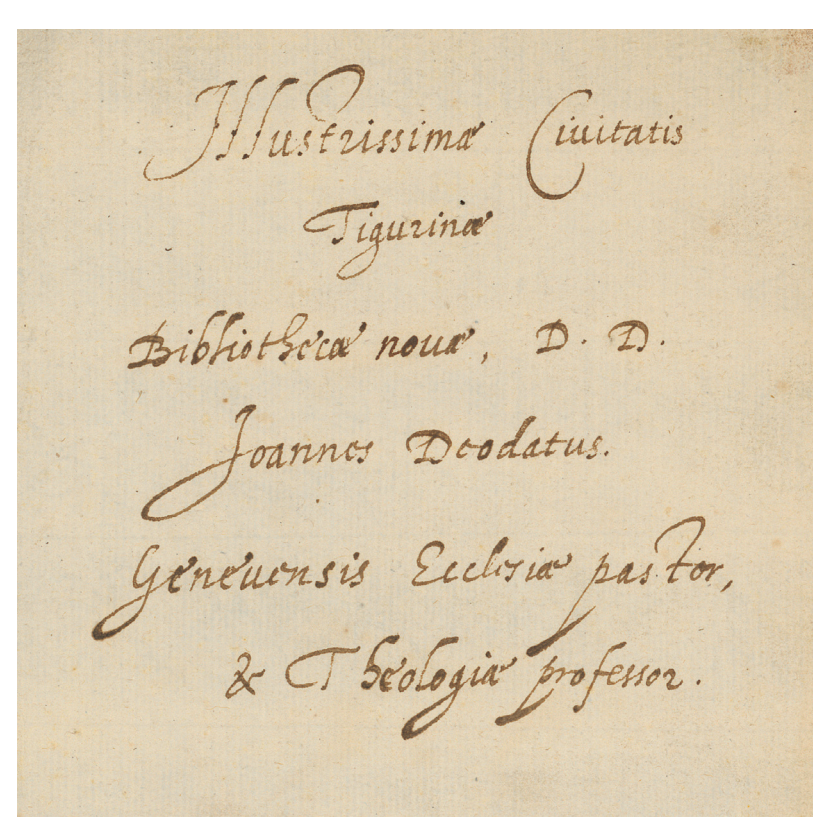


Richard Baxter: La vusch da Deus, S.I. 1669.
The extant book donation of Johannes Cafilisch in Zentralbibliothek Zürich.

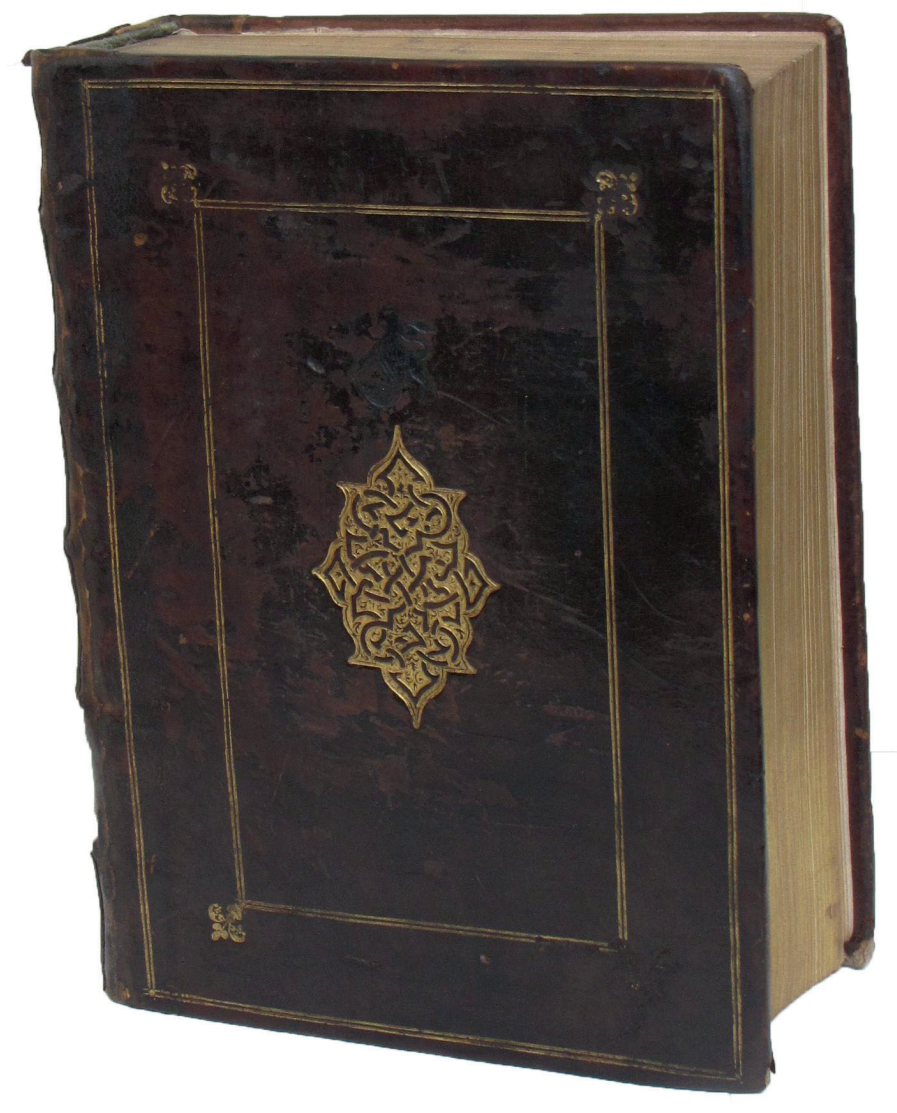


Giovanni Diodati schenkt am 14. August 1630
La Bibbia, transl. da Giovanni Diodati. Genf: Tournes, 1607. Handschriftlicher Schenkungsvermerk auf dem Vorsatz. Dunkler Ledereinband der Zeit mit goldgeprägtem Plattenstempel (Genfer Werkstatt), Goldschnitt. Signatur: Bibl 169

I sacri Salmi messi in rime Italiane da Giovanni Diodati. S.l. 1631.

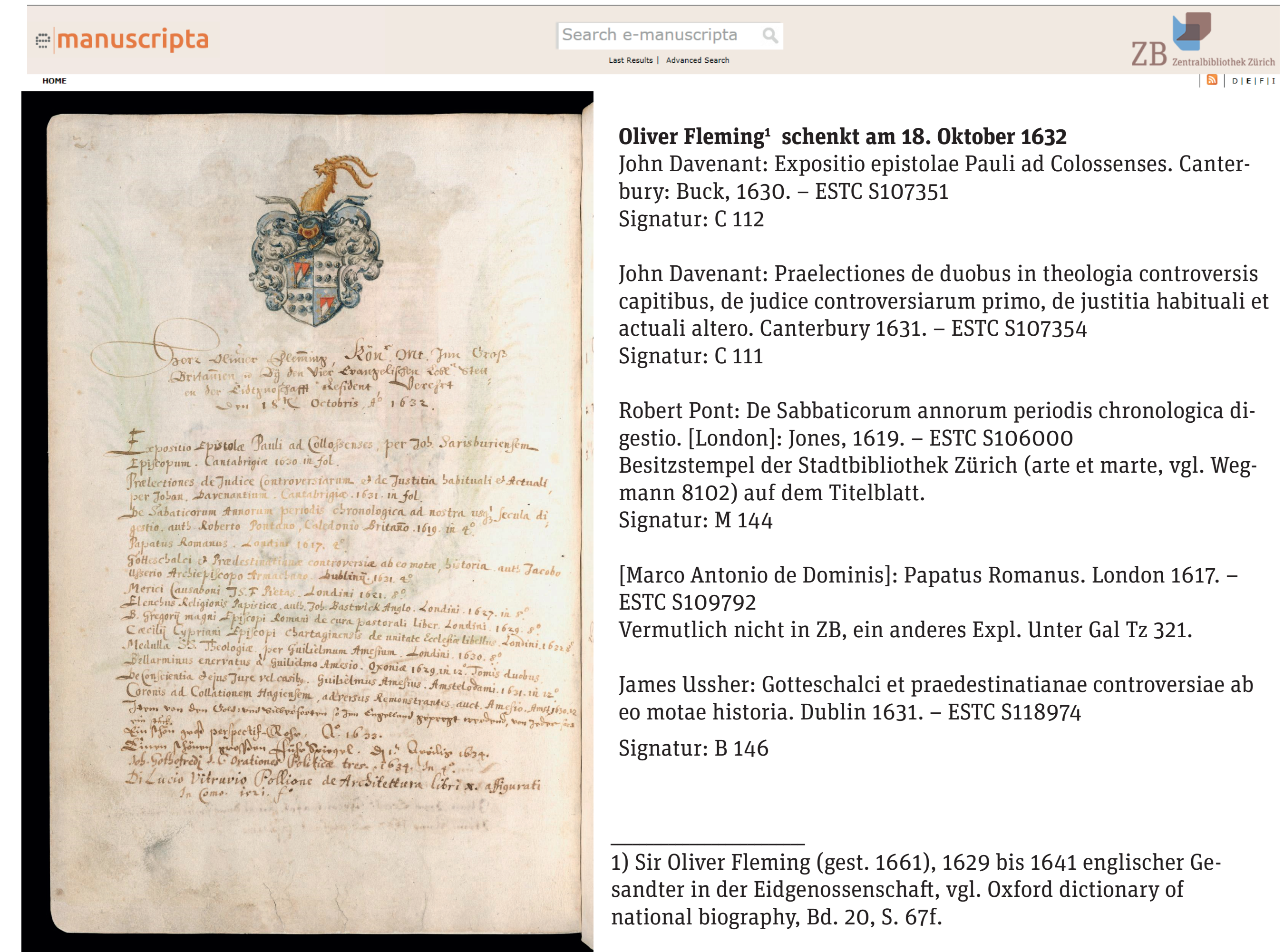


Diodati's dedication in the copy of Zentralbibliothek Zürich.



How to access this source?

The Zurich manuscript has been digitised and is freely accessible to the public via e-manuscripta.ch, the platform for digitised manuscripts from Swiss libraries and archives. The electronic edition includes many useful features such as transliterations of donator names and book/print titles or names, additional information on the donors (biographical data) and the prints donated (bibliographical data) as well as hints to copies of prints and manuscripts mentioned if held by Zentralbibliothek Zürich.



Oliver Fleming' schenkt am 18. Oktober 1632
John Davenant: Expositio epistolae Pauli ad Colossenses. Canterbury: Buck, 1630. – ESTC S107351
Signatur: C 112

John Davenant: Praelectiones de duobus in theologia controversis capitibus, de iudice controversiarum primo, de iustitia habituali et actuali altero. Canterbury 1631. – ESTC S107354
Signatur: C 111

Robert Pont: De Sabbaticorum annorum periodis chronologica digestio. [London]: Jones, 1619. – ESTC S106000
Besitzstempel der Stadtbibliothek Zürich (arte et marte, vgl. Wegmann 8102) auf dem Titelblatt.
Signatur: M 144

[Marco Antonio de Dominis]: Papatu Romanus. London 1617. – ESTC S109792
Vermutlich nicht in ZB, ein anderes Expl. Unter Gal Tz 321.

James Ussher: Gotteschalci et praedestinatianae controversiae ab eo motae historia. Dublin 1631. – ESTC S118974
Signatur: B 146

1) Sir Oliver Fleming (gest. 1661), 1629 bis 1641 englischer Gesandter in der Eidgenossenschaft, vgl. Oxford dictionary of national biography, Bd. 20, S. 67f.

Outlook

In addition to the aforementioned features, the donors identified could be linked to the Integrated Authority File (GND Gemeinsame Normdatei), and links could be provided from the transliterated titles to the respective entries in the library catalogue or to digitised copies of the respective books if available. To sum up, the electronic edition is and should remain easy to use. Regarding other donation books in Switzerland, however, their digitisation and publishing via e-manuscripta.ch remains a desideratum.

References

Bibliothecae novae Tigurinorum publico privatae Album, das ist: Stamm- und Nammbuch der neüwangelstellten Bibliothec einer Burgerschaft der Loblichen Statt Zürich, Handschrift auf Papier, 1629-1769, Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Arch St 22.
Editor: Christian Scheidegger, Zentralbibliothek Zürich
Website: www.e-manuscripta.ch/zuz/content/titleinfo/1485594