

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Susanna De Schepper, project lead. Short Title Catalogue Flanders (STCV). Database

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ample discussion and reward. Finally, that such a large corpus of material is open access is a boon, as many projects that made similar online editions, based on earlier (mainly print) editions, are behind paywalls. For this, the project must be commended, especially as it is such a longstanding digital project that not only presents the knowledge-collecting endeavours of Samuel Hartlib but makes this knowledge freely accessible.

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Susanna De Schepper, project lead.

Short Title Catalogue Flanders (STCV). Database.

Antwerp: Flanders Heritage Libraries, 2000. Accessed 18 June 2020.
stcv.be/en.

Since 2000, the Short Title Catalogue Flanders (STCV) project has been building an online bibliography of all editions of books printed in Flanders between 1473 and 1801. Maintained by the Vlaamse Erfgoedbibliotheek (Flanders Heritage Libraries), an organization composed of six heritage libraries in Belgium, the database supports the group's goal to spread knowledge of collections based in Flanders and Brussels. Now celebrating its twentieth year, the database boasts descriptions of more than twenty-five thousand editions based on data from around fifty thousand copies.

The method section on the website clearly explains what is and is not included on the database. All the books listed were printed in Flanders, as defined by current boundaries, with the exception of books claiming to be printed within Flanders on false imprints. Journals are not included. Each record was compiled with the book in hand covering items from twenty-six collections in Belgium as well as thirty-one libraries outside of Flanders. There is also a handy table updated monthly showing which collections have been fully processed and which are still to be added. While not included in the first iteration, single-sheet items are being added gradually. It is important to bear in mind any exclusions if you are using the database to gain a wider overview of printing in Flanders pre-1801.

The database and all the metadata (including illustrations) are free for anyone to use. The website even provides guidance on how to download and export data from the site and the best way to attribute information. Each record has a distinct URL and is displayed in HTML format with options to see each record in CATXML or MARCXML (a format more familiar to librarians). There are almost four thousand fully digitized books and an even greater number of digitized title pages available in the database. The content itself is clearly intended for researchers of early modern hand press printing, cataloguers, and others with specialist knowledge of rare books. The records use specific bibliographic terminology, including signatures, fingerprinting, and sheet counts which may be unfamiliar to many. The database is an analytical bibliography with each record describing, in detail, ideal copies, i.e., the composition of the book when it came off the printing press, rather than providing copy-specific details such as provenance or bindings. The database is therefore aimed at those interested in the design, text, and creation of an edition rather than the materiality or history of an individual copy.

Although the database hosts a smaller number of items compared to the hundreds of thousands of editions listed online on the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) or the Short Title Catalogue Netherlands (STCN), the bibliographic detail provided for each record is significant. Records include information on typography, layout, ornaments, use of colour, printer devices, and more. Such details are incredibly useful for scholars in understanding the composition of early modern books, the movement and re-use of type, and the development of printing techniques. The records also note when the price of the book has been printed on the page or when there is a list of subscribers—providing a fascinating insight into the crucial role of finance in the early modern book trade.

There are a few different ways to search the database. There are the customary general and advanced searches which allow the user to find a particular title, author, printer, place of publication, or language. Crucially, search terms such as author names have been standardized and linked to an authority file meaning that, even if an author is known by different names, all the records associated with that author will appear. Each search result also allows the user either to view a selection of titles or to filter further. The only criticism of these general searches is when the phrase “not produced any results or was too extensive” appears. These are very different search outcomes, which

makes it difficult to know whether to continue searching or not. There is also a record search if you have an STCV record number. If you are not looking for a specific title or book, you can also search the data through the “Index Search” and the “Browse” function. The “Index Search” is useful in placing a record within the wider context of the database. Searching “Dutch” under language brings up a list of all the languages listed on the database and the number of editions printed in each language. The largest percentage of editions are published in Dutch, which is unsurprising given that the origin of the STCV was rooted in books printed in Dutch between 1601 and 1700. It is interesting, however, to see the comparison with other languages such as French and Latin as well as the number of items printed in Polish, Italian, and Hebrew. The view selection tab further helps compare specific records and data. The “Browse” function allows the user to study the material through set keywords—“Subject headings,” “Publication types,” “Typography,” “Paratexts,” and “Uniform title”—and is a good place to start when getting an idea of the true scope of the resource. Starting with the publication type “Almanacs and prognostications,” I was able to filter the results to include only those printed in Antwerp in gothic typeface and with astronomy as a subject. The only thing I could not find was a date filter. Each keyword heads a hierarchy of search terms which get narrower and more specific, allowing users to drill down deeper into the data. Subject terms are often defined differently across catalogues, especially with broad topics such as “Science” or “Arts,” and the links and definitions on the database provide clarity.

The home page is clear and well laid out in a good-sized font with the option of using the website in Dutch, English, or French. The only obvious difference is the “News” section which only appears in the Dutch version. Even something as simple as having the search bar always remaining at the top of the page when scrolling is helpful. The searches and results are also easy to navigate. Another good feature is the search history which saves the user’s records and searches while the browser is left open as the large number of links between records encourage exploration of the data. It is easy to start searching for one thing and to get side-tracked by all the different options.

One of the most impressive parts of the website is the documentation. Not all researchers of the early modern book, or the early modern period in general, will have training or knowledge in the more detailed aspects of material or analytical bibliography. The database helps by providing extensive resources,

definitions, and quick references to guide users. The manual is transparent over how and why the bibliography has been created. This is beneficial for cataloguers and helps the user decide how useful the website is for their own research needs. Overall, while the database is clearly aimed at a fairly specialist audience, the information is presented in a strong, user-friendly manner. Even for people who are not familiar with concepts of state versus issue or gothic typeface versus roman, the website does an excellent job at revealing and sharing collections that few may have had the chance to explore.

ALEXANDRA HILL

Wellcome Collection

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**Magni, Isabella, Lia Markey, and Maddalena Signorini, eds.
Italian Paleography. Other.**

Toronto: University of Toronto / St. Louis: Walter J. Ong SJ Center for Digital Humanities / Chicago: Newberry Library, 2019. Accessed 27 December 2019.
italian-paleography.library.utoronto.ca.

Italian Paleography provides visitors with digitized versions of 102 handwritten Italian documents and the apparatus for contextualizing them, practising transcription, and applying or developing paleography skills at varying levels. The editors explain that the texts were chosen for their authenticity and readability for a contemporary user of the site. Resources for many of the documents include three-hundred-word background essays on the historical context and identity of authors (where available), a description of the manuscript, a paleographic description of the hand in Italian, and a bibliography. This resource represents ambitious collaboration across specializations. In addition to its three editors, Italian Paleography was developed and is maintained by nine members of two technical teams from the University of Toronto and the Walter J. Ong SJ Center for Digital Humanities, five consultants (three of whom are also contributors), thirty contributors from American and European universities and American libraries and museums, and eleven individuals representing four units at the Newberry Library. The technical teams represent all stages of development, from special collections to user experiences. The content creators include