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BOOK IN CONTEXT

ed. Outi Merisalo

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Preface

Book history as a scholarly discipline reaches back to the *Handschriftenkunde* (later called *codicologie*, *codicology*, etc. in different languages) that developed in the nineteenth century. Such figures as Wilhelm Wattenbach (1819-1897), Ludwig Traube (1861-1907) and Léopold Delisle (1826-1910) firmly established that the most efficient method for investigating written documents of the past is an all-round approach combining the information obtained from the text transmitted, the writing used, the material characteristics of the documents and relevant indications in catalogues and inventories of libraries, archives, auctioneers etc. Every manuscript and document is studied in its historical context. Ever since, this global approach has been dominant in manuscript studies. In the study of the printed book, a similar approach has become increasingly popular in the last few decades. Somewhat surprisingly, manuscript scholars and students of the printed book often seem to operate in different spheres, completely ignoring each other. It was to bring together specialists of both fields that the Finnish Book Historical Society (*Suomen kirjahistoriallinen seura ry – Bokhistoriska sällskapet i Finland rf*) decided to celebrate its first ten years of activity by organizing a colloquium entitled *Book in context. The production and distribution of the European book in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age (500-1800)* (1-2 November 2007). The event was generously financed by the Academy of Finland, with support from the Department of Languages of the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Helsinki and the Cercle Franco-Finlandais de Helsinki. I wish to express my gratitude to all the speakers and the some eighty members of the public who attended the discussions. I am also very grateful to the board members of the Book Historical Society, especially Tuija Laine and Minna Ahokas, for their help in organizing the colloquium, and to Sini Sovijärvi and Minna Varila of the Cercle Franco-Finlandais, who were instrumental in the smooth running of the event.

As it turned out, the colloquium was also the kick-off event for the first large-scale book historical project funded in Finland, *Books in transition. The role of the book in the dissemination of new ideas at an individual level in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (BIT, Academy of Finland project no. 121785, 2008-2011), based on the same cross-fertilization between manuscript and printed book studies (for details and publications, see <http://staff.jyu.fi/Members/merisalo/books>). Many of the participants of the 2007 colloquium were brought together at a colloquium organized by the BIT project at the Finnish Institute (Villa Lante al Gianicolo) in Rome on 10-12 December 2009, entitled *Dal libro manoscritto al libro stampato* [see Merisalo, Outi & Caterina Tristano (eds.) & Lorenzo Amato & Francesca Cenni & Leonardo Magionami (red.) 2010, *Dal libro manoscritto al libro*

stampato. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Roma 10-12 dicembre 2009, Spoleto (CISAM Incontri di studio 8)]. The *BIT* project was followed by more book history through the project *Transmission of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Tralmar, Academy of Finland and University of Jyväskylä no. 267518, 2013-2017), exploring what the public was really reading in late medieval manuscripts and early prints over several genres and types of volumes (for details, see <https://staff.jyu.fi/Members/merisalo/Transmission>). A collective volume highlighting the results of this exploration and bearing the same title as the project, will be published by Brepols in 2019 (*Bibliologia* 53). A new project entitled *Late Medieval and Early Modern Libraries as Knowledge Repositories, Guardians of Tradition and Catalysts of Change* (Lamemoli, Academy of Finland and University of Jyväskylä no. 307635, 2017-2021), examining six important but underexplored libraries (see <https://staff.jyu.fi/Members/merisalo/lamemoli>), will continue Finnish book historical research in an international context.

The programme of the 2007 colloquium featured altogether ten papers on European book history between 1200 and 1800. Of these papers, five are published here in a revised and updated form. I have the pleasure of thanking Elizabeth Peterson and Thomas Hoffmann for their competent English and German language revision. I am grateful to the editorial board, especially to general editor Peter Zeeberg and his very competent and efficient successor, Camilla Horster, for accepting to publish the volume in *Renaissanceforum*.

Wolfenbüttel, 13 June 2019

Outi Merisalo, editor of *Renaissanceforum* 15

Table of Contents

Marie-Hélène TESNIÈRE, Librairie et politique du livre sous Charles V	1
Peter ZEEBERG, Heinrich Rantzau (1526-1598): patron of the arts and bibliophile	15
Tiiu REIMO, The development of printing in present-day Finland and Estonia in the seventeenth century	33
Liivi AARMA, The role of clergymen from Finland and mainland Sweden in developing book culture in the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Estonia	55
Kristi VIIDING, Gefährliche Bücher, gefährliche Gattungen, gefährliche Vorlagen: die Geburt der Satire in Livland	73

