



“Signa vides – Researching and recording printers’ devices: current activities and new perspectives”. CERL Workshop. Anja Wolkenhauer, Tübingen; Michaela Scheibe, Berlin; Andreas Fingernagel, Vienna, 17.03.2015—18.03.2015.

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“Signa vides – Researching and recording printers’ devices: current activities and new perspectives”. **CERL Workshop**

Under the auspices of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL), Anja Wolkenhauer (Tübingen), Michaela Scheibe (Berlin) and Andreas Fingernagel (Vienna) have organised, on 17 and 18 March 2015, the workshop *“Signa vides - Researching and recording printers’ devices: current activities and new perspectives”*.

Printers’ devices combine pictures, texts (mottos) and printer-related information in very elaborated and variable ways. A certain part of them lost its original context and can be found today in single-leaf collections. Researching and recording these devices can be a real challenge, as they ask for specific bibliographical tools. After a long period of scientific neglect, today there are a lot of current initiatives to establish models of description in different databases.

In the workshop, the participants came together to discuss current research activities and possible methods of description in order to link those initiatives and get confirmed standards for recording printers’ devices in future projects.

In her keynote lecture *“Old and new research on printers’ devices”*, ANJA WOLKENHAUER (Tübingen) gave a brief survey of the history of research on printers’ devices, distinguishing several different approaches. Although the first known paste album of printers’ marks dates from 1580, the first comprehensive attempts to describe and catalogue printers’ marks in a

systematic way were made by Friedrich Roth-Scholtz in the early 18th century. Whereas these approaches were based on iconography, 19th century researchers, like Silvestre, McKerrow and Heitz, focused on print variance, ignoring motto and other texts, as well as iconography. The early researchers worked with single sheet collections detached from the books, and thus from their original contexts. Printers’ devices became graphics in their own right and were no longer seen as book signs belonging to a printer. During the 20th century, the emblematic relevance of the printers’ devices has been relegated to the shadows and wrongly seen as a later, applied form of emblematics.

In the light of the above, Wolkenhauer framed three major research areas, concentrating on (1) self-fashioning, (2) a cartography of knowledge (for the motifs), and (3) historical media research, and appointed media-specific data (e.g. iconography, motto), book-specific data (location, explanations in the paratext), biographical data about the printer, as well as chronological and geographical data as essential information for researchers.

Printers’ devices contain information about the printers’ skills and intellectual horizon, and were used for various purposes, e.g. book advertising. In her conclusion, Wolkenhauer emphasised the need to develop new categories to capture the detailed information in printers’ devices for research on mental history and the

characterisation of the printer.

MELINDA SIMON's (Szeged) paper 'Cataloguing printers' marks in Hungary' focused on the achievements and objectives of research on printers' devices of a European nation with a relatively small publishing industry, as well as emerging issues. Beginning with an overview of the publications about Hungarian printers' devices, which are documented completely until 1900 and often printed abroad, Simon concentrated on the difficulties of current research on modern devices: e.g. the rapidly growing number of printers' and publishers' marks in the 20th century and thus the demand for a revised methodology for their description. In the second part of her paper, Simon explained her plans and conditions for additional volumes of the bibliography of Hungarian printers' devices, emphasising some interesting facts, which should be recorded properly and systematically: some printers used a similar cliché with only tiny differences to personalise the signets, others cited renowned devices, e.g. Bruce Rogers using a thistle in the shape of Aldus' anchor and dolphin signet; some devices had an obvious commercial function, others were reused as decorative elements on library buildings. A small set of 38 terms is used to describe motifs in Hungarian printers' devices, so Simon determined the installation of international standards and a shared database as a desideratum.

'When is a device not a device?' Taking up Simon's explanations with this leading question in her paper about 'Problematic woodcuts from Krakow printing shops', JUSTYNA KILIAŃCZYK-ZIĄBA (Krakow) framed the difficulties of identifying printers' devices. In her research on ideological inspirations and iconographic models of the printers' devices used in early modern Poland-Lithuania, KiliaŃczyk-ZiĄba came across a number of woodcuts that proved difficult to classify, images that changed their function over time, and compositions that probably never served as printers' devices. KiliaŃczyk-ZiĄba presented several examples of 'problematic cases' found in books printed in Krakow in the 16th century and at the beginning of the 17th century, e.g. illustrating that some printers' devices were later used as mere title page illustrations by other printers. The image of an obelisk was often used as a typical distinguishing feature by the 16th century mathematician and astronomer Georg Joachim Rheticus, sometimes functioning as a printers' device, sometimes as a decorative element; the image of a willow tree as the symbol of constancy was used as an image in an emblematic book in 1562, but one year later as a printers' device; and

the Cracowian printer Hieronymus Vietor as well as two other colleagues reused the well-known signet of Johann Froben in the colophon and on the title page to benefit from his high reputation. In the light of these examples, KiliaŃczyk-ZiĄba resumed that sometimes only a close look at the text can help to distinguish an illustration and a printers' device, and that the device did not function as a trademark of a printer's workshop in many cases, since a kind of brand awareness only developed much later and printers were free to use their devices with different intentions. So individual analysis of the images is essential to identify a printers' device correctly. KiliaŃczyk-ZiĄba identified this fact as a problem of the 16th and 17th century, whereas in the beginning, heraldic images served as printers' devices, which could not be used for different purposes and later, symbolic images came up.

ELISABETH KLECKER (Vienna) spoke about 'Emblems, rebuses, (mirror) monograms. Strategies of intermediality in Viennese printers' marks (1500-1800)', beginning with a characterisation of Austrian collections and digitisation projects like the MAK collection of 500 European printers' marks on the web. Klecker gave an overview of previous scholarship on Viennese marks which can be traced back to the pioneering studies by Michael Denis (18th century) and Anton Mayer (late 19th century). But on the whole, Klecker considered the present status of research as insufficient: Whereas catalogues have been compiled for early Viennese woodcuts including printers' marks and publishers' devices, baroque marks are generally neglected, except for those of Johann Thomas Trattner (1717-1798). Moreover, a common database is missing by now. In her paper, Klecker focused on various combinations of text or script and image, and on recent literary theory questions on authorship and authorisation: She argued that the printer acts as an intermediary between writer and reader, authoring the outward appearance of the text, thus influencing or even controlling its perception. From this point of view, printers' marks should be considered in a wider context of authorising and advertising, including allusions to famous models. Another result of Klecker's research was that printers' devices must not necessarily appear on the title page or in the colophon. Mirror monograms used by high quality printers such as Johann Jakob Kärner and Leopold Johann Kaliwoda regularly appear within decorative borders and vignettes on one of the first text pages, where they are easily overlooked at first sight.

The second day of the workshop was opened by MARINA VENIER (Rome). In her paper on 'Italian print-

ersâ devices databases: from EDIT16 to SBN and not least MAR.T.E.â, Venier introduced various efficient tools and databases for recording Italian printersâ devices. The database EDIT16 contains the description of 2,520 printersâ and publishersâ devices of the 16th century, including descriptions of the main figurative elements, the dates of use, mottoes and linked images. The printersâ devices archive of the shared online catalogue of the Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale (SBN) offers a similar structure and equal details, referring to monographs from the incunabula era up to 1830. Venier considered cooperative cataloguing beyond language barriers and the normalization of the data content as the prime task for libraries. Therefore, the National Central Library of Rome uses the iconclass codes in MAR.T.E. (Marche Tipografiche Editoriali), and the concept of a collaborative database in progress.

Contrary to the elaborated Italian databases, which are however restricted to the Italian language, the Rare Book and Manuscript Library of the University of Barcelona has developed a database on printersâ devices in Catalan, Spanish and English, except for the free-text fields, such as âDevice/Mottoâ or âPlace of activityâ, only available in Catalan. In her paper, NEUS VERGER ARCE (Barcelona) introduced the database and explained its specific features and different search options. The database is maintained in close connection with the cataloguing of the early printed books. Each printer record includes information about his activity, the sources used, a link to the printer records of the bibliographical catalogue of the University library, and the devices used by the printer. The devices are characterized by identifying terms and accompanied by an image of the device and a link to the bibliographical record representing the source of the image. The full list of more than 350 terms at present is maintained in an internal excel file in all three languages in alphabetical order and can be browsed in the database. The 2,000 printer records are configured as Catalan authority files and integrated into the CERL thesaurus.

In his paper on âDutch printersâ devicesâ, HANS BRANDHORST (Rotterdam) gave a summary of the development of the catalogue of Dutch printersâ devices 15th-17th century from a standalone catalogue in 1999 to a networked web resource at present, implementing new technical functions as well as research results with every edition and new medium. Although the published CDâversion offered complex search functionality, the catalogue still was a static snapshot of a dynamically expanding corpus, as the Short Title Catalogue Nether-

lands (STCN) project continued to collect new data. No use could be made of the further development of the thesaurus of printersâ names, and the Iconclass system. Against this background, the static database was incorporated into the dynamic environment of a web resource called Archyves and can now be linked to thesauri, like that of STCN, and the webservice of the Iconclass system.

MICHAELA SCHEIBE and CHRISTINA SCHMITZ (both Berlin) concluded the workshop with their paper on approaches to use an already established infrastructure for a standardised recording of printersâ devices: the Integrated Authority File (GND) hosted by the German National Library. It contains data records representing persons, corporate bodies, conferences, geographic entities, topics and works. These authority records constitute a common, conclusive reference system with persistent identifiers and interoperable metadata. The GND is actively used not only by libraries, but also by archives, museums and other scientific and cultural institutions in the German-speaking countries. GND authority records form part of the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF) and are combined with data from other national authority files. Printersâ devices have recently been accepted as a special entity in the GND and their description in adequate authority records have just been tested by the speakers. These records allow linking to other authority records (e.g. the records for printers and publishers, artists, places) and data about measurements, motifs, mottoes, period of use et al. One difficult aspect is the correct identification and description of motifs, which requires arthistorical knowledge and may be very time-consuming. The crucial element to specify a particular device is the appropriate image. Scheibe and Schmitz introduced a newly established wiki used by the Berlin State Library to store images of particular devices and edit additional information about the printer and dates of use, as well as references and links to catalogues, digitized books and bibliographies. The wiki is hosted by the GBV union catalogue (a library network centered in GÃ¶ttingen) and operates with the Wikipedia software. One alternative to the complex verbal description of motifs may be the use of image search methods. Some pre-tests by the Berlin State Library were very promising. Based on the open source software LIRe (Lucene Image Retrieval), the information scientists developed a first draft of a search system which can be trained easily to identify identical and similar printersâ devices in a collaborative database.

In the final discussion, the speakers resumed that the different approaches on researching and recording print-

ersâ devices are relatively similar in the different countries. But they also identified some essential tasks to work on, like the limitation of most of the databases to one or two languages, thus the lack of a unicode description, or the question of linking the devices to the edition, in which they were found, and the requirement to be well integrable into the daily workflow.

Conference Overview:

Chair: Michaela Scheibe

Anja Wolkenhauer (University of Tübingen), Old & new research on printersâ devices

Melinda Simon (University of Szeged), Cataloguing printersâ marks in Hungary â achievements and objectives

Justyna Kiliańczyk-ZiÅba (Jagiellonian University Krakow), When is a device not a device? Problematic

woodcuts from Krakow printing shops

Elisabeth Klecker (University of Vienna), Emblems, rebuses, (mirror) monograms. Strategies of intermediality in Viennese printersâ marks (1500-1800)

Chair: Anja Wolkenhauer

Marina Venier (National Central Library of Rome), Italian printersâ devices databases: from EDIT16 to SBN and not least MAR.T.E.

Neus Verger Arce (University of Barcelona), The Printersâ Devices database of the University of Barcelona

Hans Brandhorst (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Dutch printersâ devices â from standalone catalogue to networked web resource

Michaela Scheibe / Christina Schmitz (Berlin State Library), Towards a standardised description of printersâ devices: authority files and more

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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