

# Book Trade Catalogues: From Bookselling Tool to Book Historical Source

*Arthur der Weduwen, Andrew Pettegree and Graeme Kemp*

In 1625, the University of Leiden appointed a young mathematician, Jacobus Golius, as their new professor of Arabic and Oriental Languages. Golius was filling a distinguished post, succeeding the late Thomas Erpenius, an international philological star. Leiden was a young university, and its prestige as a centre for the study of Oriental Languages was crucial to its appeal to students across Europe. Recruiting distinguished professors was the first strategy that Leiden employed to maintain its lustre: the other was to acquire an unrivalled collection of rare books. For this reason, Golius set off, only a year after his appointment, on a four year long tour of the Eastern Mediterranean, in search of Arabic and Oriental manuscripts. The trip was an overwhelming success, and Golius was received home in 1629 in the fashion of a triumphant conqueror returning with spoils of war. Some 230 Arabic, Turkish and Persian works were presented by Golius to the university library, cementing Leiden's reputation, after the Bodleian Library in Oxford, as the greatest centre of Oriental studies in the western world.

Over the years, however, it emerged that Golius had not delivered to Leiden the entire haul of his funded tour of the Levant. Some of the most prized pieces he had kept for himself, including several books by the Greek mathematician Apollonius, previously presumed lost. Golius claimed to fellow scholars that he was working to prepare these manuscripts for publication, and thus required them for himself, but apart from a single Arabic-Latin lexicon, no further volumes were disgorged.<sup>1</sup> When Golius died in 1667, his valuable library passed to his heirs, who prepared to sell its entirety at auction. Leiden University offered to purchase the collection *en masse*, but could not raise adequate funds. To highlight the distinction of the collection, the library was split between the 353 rare Oriental manuscripts, including 36 Chinese books, and the main part of the collection, composed of some 4,300 items. The sale of the main library

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald J. Toomer, *Apollonius: Conics Books V to VII: The Arabic Translation of the Lost Greek Original in the Version of the Banū Mūsā* (New York: Springer, 2012), pp. xxii–xxv.

went ahead, but at the last moment the heirs decided to withdraw the Oriental manuscripts and wait for an individual buyer with substantial means. This did not materialise, and the heirs finally sold the manuscripts at auction almost thirty years later, in 1696. Many of the pieces were bought by Narcissus Marsh, Archbishop of Armagh, who donated them to Leiden's great rival, the Bodleian.

The saga of Jacobus Golius and his Oriental manuscripts is a tale dominated by scholarly ego, rivalry and secrecy, themes common enough in many other stories of passionate book collectors in the early modern period. Yet for all the subterfuge, this is also a tale of publicity. Every twist in the narrative was accompanied by printed catalogues which celebrated, immortalised and publicised Golius's books. The year after his return from the Levant, the French scholar Pierre Gassendi published a list of the works that Golius had presented to Leiden, ostensibly for the benefit of the Republic of Letters.<sup>2</sup> Ten years later, when the University of Leiden re-issued a new catalogue of its collections, it separated out at the end a section for Golius's books, typeset in graceful Latin and Arabic scripts.<sup>3</sup> When the heirs came to sell the library, they had the Leiden booksellers Cornelius Hackius and Felix Lopez de Haro, experts in the auction market, produce a catalogue for the main part of the collection, while the university printers, the widow and heirs of Johannes Elzevier, were responsible for the catalogue of the Oriental manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> In 1696, two further catalogues were produced for the sale of the Oriental books, the first a re-issue of the Elzevier quarto catalogue, the second a simpler and cheaper octavo version, without the Arabic titles.<sup>5</sup>

Although booksellers had used printed catalogues to advertise their stock since the fifteenth century, it was during the seventeenth century that the catalogue came into its own as an indispensable tool of the book market.

2 *Catalogus rarorum librorum, quos ex Oriente nuper advexit, & in publica Bibliotheca inclutae Leydensis Academiae deposuit Jacobus Golius* (Paris: Antonius Vitre [for Pierre Gassendi], 1630), USTC 6021783.

3 *Catalogus bibliothecae publicae Lugduno-Batavae* (Leiden: Elzeviriana, 1640), USTC 1028172, ff. a–c4.

4 *Catalogus Instructissimae in omni facultate materia ac lingua Bibliothecae, Doctissimi Clarissimique Viri, D. Jacobi Golii* (Leiden: Cornelius Hackius and Felix Lopez de Haro, 1668). *Catalogus Insignium in omni facultate, linguisque, Arabica, Persica, Turcica, Chinensi, &c. Librorum M.Ss. Quos Doctissimus Clarissimusque Vir, D. Jacobus Golius* (Leiden: widow and heirs of Johannes Elzevier, 1668).

5 *Catalogus Insignium in omni facultate, linguisque, Arabica, Persica, Turcica, Chinensi &c. Librorum M.Ss. Quos Doctissimus Clarissimusque Vir D. Jacobus Golius* (Leiden: Johannes du Vivie, 1696), in quarto, and *Catalogus Insignium in omni facultate, linguisque, Arabica, Persica, Turcica, Chinensi &c. Librorum M.Ss. Quos Doctissimus Clarissimusque Vir D. Jacobus Golius* (Leiden: Johannes du Vivie, 1696), in octavo.

The printed book catalogue became a staple of important publishing firms establishing themselves in the international marketplace. Catalogues were published for thousands of book auctions, of personal libraries sold after the owner's death, of liquidated bookshop stock and of miscellaneous assortments of books, gathered together by opportunistic booksellers. Printed catalogues also proliferated as guides to institutional collections; as publications to memorialise a great collector, much like a funeral oration or an anthology of celebratory poems; as instructive handbooks, guiding the collector to a fashionable library; and even as crude political satire. Most of all, those who participated in the early modern book trade, from bookseller to book buyer, engaged with printed catalogues as necessary tools in the business. Lists of books were first and foremost practical instruments. They provided an overview of a collection and ordered it by size, classification and language. While every catalogue reflected the particular make-up of a single collection, all catalogues could essentially be read in the same way. Most cataloguers followed traditional models of organising books by size and faculty that had changed little since the mediaeval era; only towards the eighteenth century did cataloguers begin to question inherited systems of classification.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of printed book catalogues marks a period in which information on books, in private and institutional hands, became more easily accessible. This was a development that was closely tied to the rise of specialist book auctions, which, by their very nature, required suitable publicity for their success. The same principles of publicity were increasingly adopted by publishers and booksellers, who produced printed catalogues for the use of the book-buying public, as well as for circulation amongst their colleagues in the trade. This should remind us that, although printed catalogues ensured that more information on the availability and ownership of books was made public, these catalogues did not necessarily democratise previously exclusive information. Printed catalogues were especially valued by a lively community of scholars, librarians and booksellers who had to this point regularly copied out and exchanged manuscript lists of books.<sup>7</sup> The circulation of catalogues in print was a gradual transformation, one that took place in tandem with the use of print for a wide variety of administrative purposes in early modern Europe. Catalogues augmented the communication circuits of the European book trade: appended to correspondence between booksellers or between a bookseller and client, they were helpful tools that eliminated the need for extensive

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6 See chapters fifteen and sixteen, below.

7 See chapter two, below.

handwritten transcription of book titles. Nevertheless, the increasing use of printed catalogues over the course of the seventeenth century did establish new standards in the book trade. By 1700, printed book catalogues could be found in all regions of Europe. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was unthinkable that a published catalogue would not accompany a major book collection offered at auction.

To the historian of the book, the proliferation of printed catalogues in early modern Europe is without a doubt a blessing. Catalogues offer a goldmine of information on the early modern book trade. They allow scholars to examine questions on the distribution and ownership of books that otherwise would have been extremely difficult to pursue. Catalogues, as historical sources, have their pitfalls, but regardless of their shortcomings, they provide us with a wealth of information that enriches the study of book history and offers whole new pathways to students of material bibliography. To know what books were printed, where, by whom and in what shape and size, is of vital importance to any scholar of the book. Yet to understand a past society, we cannot limit ourselves to questions of production alone: we must consider what happened to books after they left the printer's workshop. Early modern books were natural travellers. To trace their journeys across time and space, to distant warehouses, to bookshop counters and onto private bookshelves, we can let ourselves be guided by book catalogues.

The study of catalogues also provides a useful corrective to scholarly reliance on books that can be found in major research libraries. Early modern books that survive today are not necessarily representative of the whole population of printed matter and, in consequence, overstate their contemporary importance in early modern Europe. Studying book trade catalogues, we can glimpse what books were deemed popular enough to be advertised for sale or auction, and which were used so frequently, that they never made it to a library collection today. Comparing auction catalogues, we can also discover which books, otherwise unstudied today, were owned by virtually all major collectors, while some other texts, which attract much attention from modern historians, were rarely collected. Catalogues therefore provide us with invaluable detail on the international European book trade, but also raise questions on the treacherous tides of reputation and contemporary popularity.

### Surveys of Early Modern Book Catalogues

That book catalogues are sources worthy of the attention of the historian was first pointed out comprehensively in 1957 by Archer Taylor in his *Book*

*Catalogues: Their Varieties and Uses*.<sup>8</sup> Taylor's work included a lengthy list of early book catalogues 'that have been recommended for reference use'; highlighting especially those catalogues deemed of interest to the librarian or cataloguer. This focus encapsulates how catalogues were traditionally studied, as part of a canon of bibliographical information. They were primarily perceived as reference tools which allowed one to locate and accurately describe an edition. This approach generated little interest in catalogues as books themselves, or in the broader context in which they operated. Instead attention concentrated on catalogues famous for their size, breadth or quality of description, like those of La Croix du Maine (1584), the Bodleian Library at Oxford (1605 onwards) and Nicolaas Heinsius (1682).

The first systematic overview of early printed catalogues appeared only in 1965. The pioneering survey by Graham Pollard and Albert Ehrman, published for the Roxburghe Club in a print run of 150 copies, offered a chronological and thematic overview of the development of printed catalogues throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup> Despite its scholarly rigour, the limited number of copies in circulation ensured that its impact for further work on catalogues was rather dampened. When a copy came onto the market in the early 1990s, it was advertised for sale at £2,750, a price higher than many early modern catalogues may fetch at auction today.<sup>10</sup> Pollard and Ehrman's work remains an invaluable starting point for any work on early modern catalogues, yet its census of sixteenth and seventeenth-century catalogues was, as the authors conceded at publication, of limited scope. Based primarily on the outstanding collection of catalogues in the possession of Albert Ehrman, complemented by information gathered largely from the Bodleian and the British Library, the breadth of the survey was naturally circumscribed. Munby and Coral's list of British sales catalogues up to 1800 and Alston's inventory of named sales have since plugged some of the gaps in Pollard and Ehrman for the years when book sales catalogues became a prominent feature of the British book market.<sup>11</sup>

8 Archer Taylor, *Book Catalogues: Their Varieties and Uses* (Chicago: The Newberry Library, 1957). A second, revised edition appeared in 1986.

9 Graham Pollard and Albert Ehrman, *The Distribution of Books by Catalogue from the Invention of Printing to A.D. 1800* (Cambridge: The Roxburghe Club, 1965).

10 Giles Mandelbrote, 'A New Edition of *The Distribution of Books by Catalogue: Problems and Prospects*', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 89 (1995), pp. 399–408, here p. 400.

11 A.N.L. Munby and Lenore Coral, *British Book Sale Catalogues, 1676–1800* (London: Mansell, 1977); R.C. Alston, *Inventory of Sale Catalogues of Named and Attributed Owners of Books Sold by Retail or Auction, 1676–1800: An Inventory of Sales in the British Isles, America, the United States, Canada and India* (2 vols., St Philip, Barbados: Privately Printed for the Author, 2010).

Further pioneering work took place in the Netherlands, chiefly under the leadership of Bert van Selm. In 1976, Van Selm came across a collection of over six hundred seventeenth-century Dutch book catalogues in the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, many of them unique surviving copies. This discovery led Van Selm to an investigation of book catalogues as twin tools for the study of the book trade and the history of collecting. A series of articles in *Quaerendo* in the early 1980s set out Van Selm's developing analysis of the first printed auction catalogues and a series of significant sales catalogues of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup> As Van Selm's work attracted broader interest, he began work on a systematic survey of Dutch catalogues before 1800. The project was completed by several colleagues after Van Selm's tragically early death, culminating ultimately in a superb digital resource, *Book Sales Catalogues Online*, hosted by Brill.<sup>13</sup> This unparalleled survey offers access to almost 4,000 surviving Dutch stock and auction catalogues, reproduced from the holdings of over fifty libraries across Europe.

*Book Sales Catalogues Online* remains unsurpassed in comprehensiveness and detail of description. Since the 1990s, surveys for other domains have also been in preparation. A listing of French catalogues, 1630–1715, held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, saw the light in 1991; a comprehensive list of Danish auction catalogues appeared in 2007.<sup>14</sup> Other ventures have concentrated on providing European-wide surveys. Chris Coppens has been preparing a census of sales catalogues before 1600, while Giles Mandelbrote is engaged

12 The articles are to some extent replicated in Van Selm's excellent Dutch monograph, *Een menighe treffelijcke boeken. Nederlandse boekhandelscatalogi in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw* (Utrecht: HES, 1987). A helpful summary of Van Selm's life and achievements is found in Hannie van Goinga, 'In memoriam Bert van Selm, 1945–91', *Quaerendo*, 22 (1992), pp. 82–88. Various pieces by Van Selm, as well as a bibliography of his works, are found in his *Inzichten en Vergezichten. Zes beschouwingen over het onderzoek naar de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse boekhandel*, edited by Hannie van Goinga and Paul Hoftijzer (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1992).

13 See <https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/book-sales-catalogues-online>. The development of BSCO is described extensively by Otto Lankhorst, who made significant discoveries for the project, in his 'Dutch Book Auctions in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (eds.), *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century* (Newcastle: Oak Knoll Press, London: The British Library, 2001), pp. 77–83.

14 Françoise Bléchet, *Les ventes publiques de livres en France, 1630–1715: répertoire des catalogues conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991). See also Annie Charon and Élisabeth Parinet (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues: XVII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: École nationale des chartes, 2000). Harald Ilsøe, *Biblioteker til salg, om danske bogauktioner og kataloger 1661–1811* (København: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2007).

on a revised edition of Pollard and Ehrman's work.<sup>15</sup> Since 1997, Gerhard Loh has worked on a systematic listing of all European printed library and auction catalogues, a venture that now spans eight volumes, and reaches to 1737.<sup>16</sup> The MEDiate team at Nijmegen, whose members have also contributed extensively to this volume, are also working on a survey of auction catalogues, covering the period 1665–1830 for the Dutch Republic, France and the British Isles.<sup>17</sup> The present authors, as part of their work on the book culture of the Dutch Republic and for the Universal Short Title Catalogue, have also unearthed references in manuscript records and newspaper advertisements to more than a thousand previously unknown book auctions.<sup>18</sup>

The foundational work required for these surveys has sparked considerable interest in printed book catalogues as sources for the history of the book trade and book collecting. This is evident not least in the growing number of edited volumes that treat early modern catalogues as objects of historical interest.<sup>19</sup> The opportunities afforded by the digital turn has also contributed to the popularity of book catalogues as a subject of study, as they allow for the construction of large datasets and collation with other digital databases. The process of gathering tens and even hundreds of thousands of pieces of data from catalogues allow scholars to answer overarching questions on the economic and social context of the book trade. Without doubt, the coming years will see book trade catalogues used as key sources to provide new insights on

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- 15 C. Coppens, 'A Census of Printers' and Booksellers' Catalogues up to 1600', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 89 (1995), pp. 447–455. Chris Coppens, 'Fondscatalogi als marketingstrategie. Een onderzoek naar lijsten van drukkers en boekhandelaren tot 1600', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse boekgeschiedenis*, 8 (2001), pp. 27–41. Mandelbrote, 'A New Edition'.
  - 16 Gerhard Loh, *Die europäischen Privatbibliotheken und Buchauktionen* (8 vols., Leipzig: Gerhard Loh, 1997–2018).
  - 17 The database is entitled BIBLIO (Bibliography of Individual Book and Library Inventories Online, 1665–1830). See the MEDiate website: <http://mediate18.nl>.
  - 18 Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World. Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (London: Yale University Press, 2019). USTC: <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/>.
  - 19 The most notable volumes are: Reinhard Wittmann (ed.), *Bücherkataloge als buchgeschichtliche quellen in der frühen neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), Malcolm Walsby and Natasha Constantinidou (eds.), *Documenting the Early Modern Book World: Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), P. Rueda Ramírez and Ll. Agustí (eds.), *La publicidad del libro en el mundo hispánico (siglos XVII–XX): los catálogos de venta de libreros y editores* (Madrid: Calambur, 2016) and Giovanna Granata and Angela Nuovo (eds.), *Selling & Collecting: Printed Book Sale Catalogues and Private Libraries in Early Modern Europe* (Macerata: eum, 2018).

the history of book prices, international distribution, collecting habits and the identification of lost books.<sup>20</sup>

### Development and Typology

Manuscript lists preceded all printed catalogues. In the process of gathering material for a published catalogue, a bookseller, auctioneer, secretary or clerk will have worked with multiple overlapping manuscript catalogues to order the material appropriately. What emerged as a printed catalogue was naturally a consequence of this process of collation. The rich profusion of catalogue styles was also a result of local bookselling practices and custom: catalogues from the Netherlands invariably have a different look to those from Copenhagen, London or Paris. For these reasons, printed book catalogues appear in various shapes and sizes. They can range from broadsheets and short pamphlets to chunky duodecimos or substantial folios. They tend to follow either an alphabetical structure, most common in retail catalogues, bookseller auction catalogues and institutional catalogues, or a structure based on subject classifications and sizes, more characteristic of auction catalogues. These structures can also be blended: a catalogue can be organised first by size, subdivided by classification, or vice versa. Some catalogues, mimicking inventories, resemble the order in which books were found on the shelves of a library or bookshop. Others are seemingly random, but one can still trace the influence of a cataloguer or auctioneer within them, placing certain high value items at the start of a section, or grouping similar items – packets of pamphlets, forbidden books or works on topography – within the catalogue.

Essentially, we can distinguish two major types of book trade catalogues: retail and auction catalogues. Retail or sales catalogues are the older form of the two. The earliest extant examples are broadsheet announcements for forthcoming books from the late 1460s. The very first printers were keenly aware that their invention required sustained publicity to establish a secure place in the market.<sup>21</sup> The typographical development of the title-page, a crucial invention

20 Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen, 'What was published in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic?', *Livres. Revue Historique* (2018), pp. 1–22. Id, 'Publicity and its Uses. Lost Books as Revealed in Newspaper Advertisements in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic', in Flavia Bruni and Andrew Pettegree (eds.), *Lost Books. Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 202–222.

21 There is a helpful table in Pollard and Ehrman, *Distribution of Books by Catalogue*, pp. 32–39. See also Falk Eisermann and Volker Honemann, 'Die ersten typografischen Einblattdrucke', *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 75 (2000), pp. 88–131. For early publicity more



of the print trade in its infant years, ultimately rendered announcements for single books obsolete. It was easier to run-off additional copies of a title-page and circulate these amongst colleagues in the trade, or exhibit them outside shops and stalls.

Broadsheets did remain in use when printers wished to advertise a whole range of items printed at their shop, or stock available for sale.<sup>22</sup> In his *Bibliotheca Universalis* (1545), the scholar and bibliographer Conrad Gesner wrote that

Most printers and booksellers, especially those furnished with the more learned sort of books, have broadsides and lists of books which they have printed or have for sale, and some of these have actually been printed as booklets.<sup>23</sup>

Gesner's hint of surprise that stock catalogues could also appear as pamphlets was because this was a pioneering development of his day. The earliest extant octavo retail catalogues appeared in the later 1530s, in Basel, right at the time when Gesner was a student at the university there. By the 1540s, they were also used in Gesner's hometown of Zürich as well as in Paris and Lyon.<sup>24</sup> As Gesner indicated, these catalogues were issued exclusively by publishers who were significant players in the international scholarly market. The firms of Froben, Gryphius, Estienne, Wechel, Froschauer and Colines were some of the most important typographer-booksellers of the era, residing in the busiest print centres of Europe. To Gesner, these retail catalogues were helpful sources for his universal bibliography; to the publishers who issued them, they were tools with which to announce themselves in foreign markets, as well as distinguish themselves in their own competitive centres. Given that many of these early catalogues advertised works produced by the publisher, rather than general

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broadly, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *Divine Art, Infernal Machine. The Reception of Printing in the West from First Impressions to the Sense of an Ending* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

22 G. Richter, *Verlegerplakate des xvi. und xvii. Jahrhunderts bis zum Begin des Dreissig-jährigen Krieges* (Wiesbaden: Guido Pressler, 1965). R. Engelsing, *Deutsche Bücherplakate des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Guido Pressler, 1971).

23 Cited in Pollard and Ehrman, *Distribution of Books by Catalogue*, pp. 47–48.

24 See for a preliminary listing, Coppens, 'Fondscatalogi als marketingstrategie', pp. 36–41. See also Christian Coppens, 'A Census of Publishers' and Booksellers' Catalogues up to 1600: Some Provisional Conclusions', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 102 (2008), pp. 557–567 and Idem, 'Marketing the Early Printed Book: Publishers' and Booksellers' Advertisements and Catalogues', *De Gulden Passer*, 92 (2014), pp. 155–180.

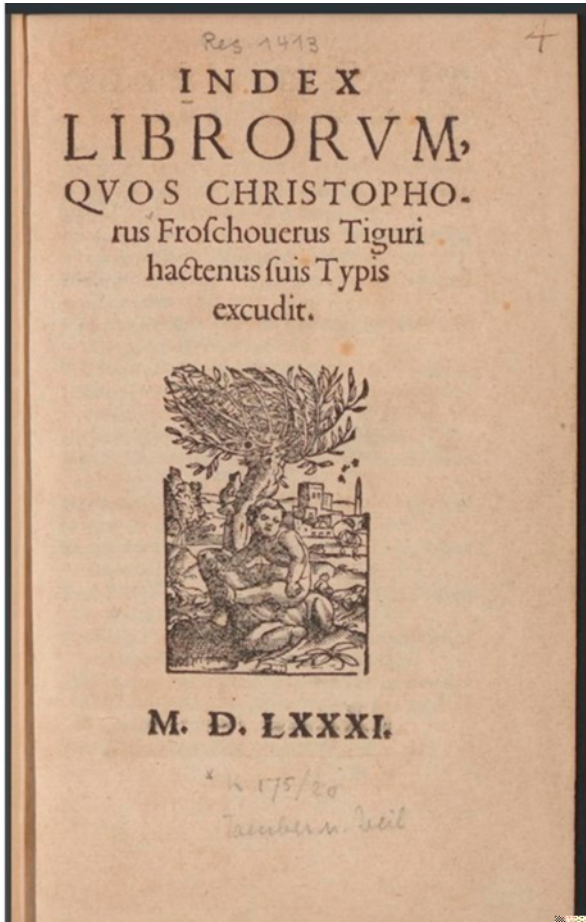


FIGURE 1.1 A typical sixteenth-century retail catalogue, issued by Christopher Froschauer in Zürich in 1581. *Index librorum, quos Christophorus Froschouerus Tiguri hactenus suis typis excudit* ([Zürich: Christoph II Froschauer], 1581), USTC 666557  
 ZENTRALBIBLIOTHEK ZÜRICH, RES 1413,  
[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-4861](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-4861)

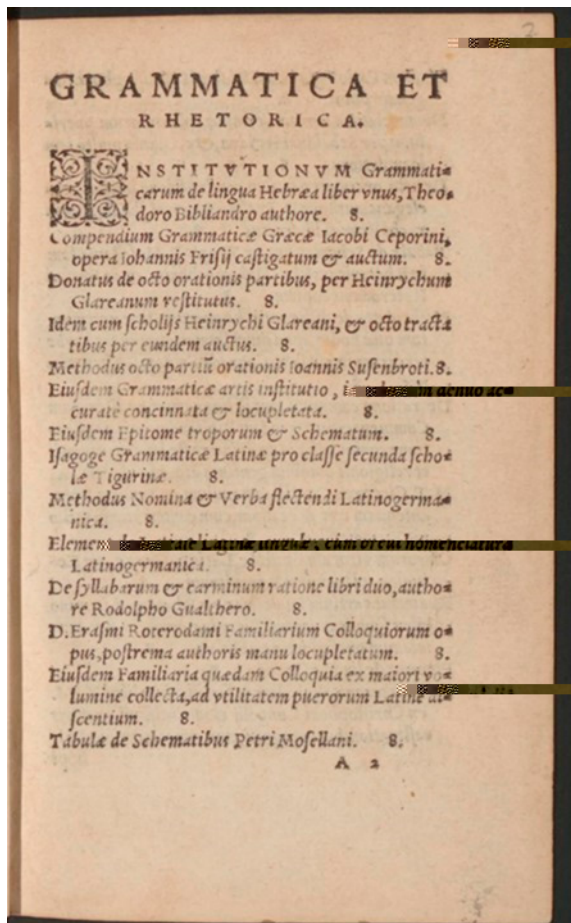


FIGURE 1.2 Most early retail and stock catalogues were structured by subject classifications, but otherwise did not have sophisticated sub-divisions. A page from *Index librorum, quos Christophorus Froschouer Tiguri hactenus suis typis excudit* ([Zürich: Christoph II Froschauer], 1581), USTC 666557  
ZENTRALBIBLIOTHEK ZÜRICH, RES 1413,  
[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3931/E-RARA-4861](https://doi.org/10.3931/E-RARA-4861)

stock, it is likely that the principal use of the catalogues was to facilitate the exchange of stock amongst booksellers in the international trade.<sup>25</sup>

By the 1560s and 1570s, publishers in other major centres of the European print trade, including Antwerp, Venice and Geneva, had also issued octavo or quarto retail catalogues. The contents of these catalogues were generally divided by language and subject classifications. Given the small size of the catalogues, publishers rarely organised the titles within these classifications in any particular order. Information remained restricted to author, title, format, and, in some cases, price. The presence of printed prices is remarkable, as this was a feature which was largely abandoned during the course of the seventeenth century, only to reappear in force in the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> The presence of these printed prices reinforces the notion that the catalogues were predominantly for use within the trade, rather than used as tools to entice individual retail customers, who, depending on their status and the size of their order, might be charged different prices.

Before the end of the sixteenth century, at least 280 retail and stock catalogues had been produced throughout Europe.<sup>27</sup> To this we can add another innovation of the era, the term catalogues of the Frankfurt Fair. The city of Frankfurt was home to the greatest book fair in Europe, the place where publishers from around the continent sold their wares, exchanged publications with colleagues and took note of the latest typographical developments. In 1564, the Augsburg publisher Georg Willer issued the first term catalogue, a quarto pamphlet of twenty pages, listing some 250 books for sale at the Fair.<sup>28</sup> The subsequent catalogues, published twice a year (for the spring and autumn fairs) in Frankfurt and from 1594 onwards also in Leipzig, grew in size as other booksellers attending the fairs took note. By the early seventeenth century, most instalments included over 600 books. Material for the catalogues was compiled from title-pages or slips of paper sent in by attending booksellers; the books were then organised, like most early retail catalogues, by language

25 For an insight into such practices, see Barbara C. Halporn, *The correspondence of Johann Amerbach: early printing in its social context* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

26 Bert van Selm, 'Some Amsterdam stock catalogues with printed prices from the first half of the seventeenth century', *Quaerendo*, 10 (1980), pp. 3–46.

27 Chris Coppens and Angela Nuovo, 'Printed catalogues of booksellers as a source for the history of the book trade', in Granata and Nuovo (eds.), *Selling & Collecting*, pp. 145–160, here p. 150.

28 Georg Willer, *Novorum librorum, quos nundinae autumnales, Francoforti anno 1564. Celebratae, venales exhibuerunt, catalogus* ([Lauringen: Emanuel Saltzer], 1564), USTC

and classification. The fair catalogues opened with Lutheran Theology, followed by Catholic and then Calvinist books. Works on Law, Medicine and the Arts followed, before the classifications were repeated for the German books. There were shorter sections on books in other vernaculars, and in the seventeenth century the catalogues concluded with books presented by publishers 'not attending the fair' and those books 'to be presented at future fairs'.<sup>29</sup>

The fair catalogues were undoubtedly a success. At the end of the sixteenth century fair authorities took over their supervision, and the exclusive privilege for printing the catalogues became the pride of the two main firms which maintained these for over a century, Latomus in Frankfurt and Grosse in Leipzig. It seems that the catalogues functioned most effectively for those traders, scholars and book collectors who were unable to be present at the fairs, but could thus avail themselves of the latest information on forthcoming books. During the 1620s, the catalogues were frequently reprinted in London for English buyers; Thomas Bodley used them to expand the holdings of the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Some publishers went one step further: in Amsterdam, Cornelis Claesz produced a series of catalogues in which he advertised which books he had been able to acquire at the fair, and could now sell to his local clientele in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup>

The fair catalogues enjoyed their greatest popularity in the period spanning 1580–1620, when the geographical spread of the booksellers supplying information on new books was at its greatest. As the fairs became more concentrated on the trade within the Holy Roman Empire, new ventures for term catalogues sprang up elsewhere. In the Netherlands, the Amsterdam printer Broer Jansz produced a series of bi-annual term catalogues of all books printed in the Dutch Republic, organised on very similar grounds as the fair catalogues, but with a different series of subject classifications.<sup>31</sup> Jansz's *Catalogus Universalis* even mimicked the fair catalogues in the title; sadly, the venture lasted only for the period 1639–1653. In Paris, the bibliographer Louis Jacob produced a series of term catalogues for the publication of French books, under the titles *Bibliographia Parisina* and *Bibliographia Gallica universalis*; these too appeared during the 1640s and early 1650s. By the end of the seventeenth century, major series of term catalogues were published in Amsterdam, Geneva and London,

29 For these developments see chapter ten, below.

30 Van Selm, 'Some Amsterdam stock catalogues', pp. 9–10. On Claesz and his catalogues, see also Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, pp. 40–44.

31 H.W. de Kooker (ed.), *The Catalogus Universalis of Broer Jansz (1640–1652)* (Utrecht: HES, 1986). The first sixteen issues survive; the seventeenth, published in 1653 by Jansz's successor Jan Jacobsz Bouman, does not.

which effectively complemented the increasingly German focus of the fair catalogues.<sup>32</sup>

By the late seventeenth century, book traders and collectors could also avail themselves of a great range of stock catalogues published by individual firms. These still included a traditional range of catalogues listing books produced by a specific printing house, but these were now dwarfed by general stock catalogues, advertising the entire range of titles available in a bookshop. The total number published throughout Europe for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not yet known, but up to 1700, there were a minimum of 200 published in the Dutch Republic, and another 1,000 by 1800. These stock catalogues were issued primarily by booksellers who competed in the international book trade, most notably the Elzeviers, Janssonius and Blaeu firms in the Dutch Republic, and the De Tournes family in Geneva. Throughout the seventeenth century, these catalogues ranged from a couple of thousand titles to the famous 1674 stock catalogue of Daniel Elzevier, a duodecimo of 770 pages, listing 18,247 titles.<sup>33</sup>

The larger stock catalogues, generally published in octavo or duodecimo formats, tended to organise books alphabetically by subject and language. They are without doubt a demonstration of the influence of firms like that of Elzevier in the European trade; at his death, Daniel Elzevier was owed money for orders from his shop from booksellers in thirty-nine towns in the Southern Netherlands, France, England, Germany, Scandinavia and Portugal.<sup>34</sup> He similarly acquired stock from all over Europe, as did his peers in the international trade. To Joan Blaeu or Johannes Janssonius, issuing an enormous stock catalogue was a calling card that bolstered their reputation at home and abroad. To highlight their permanent presence in the international trade, some prominent publishers, like Reinier Leers in Rotterdam, took to issuing new stock catalogues at regular intervals.<sup>35</sup>

32 The Amsterdam term catalogues, twenty-two issues from the 1670s and 1680s, appeared with the Janssonius-Waesberge firm; the Geneva catalogues with the De Tournes; and the London catalogues, over 160 between 1668 and 1711, appeared under the title *Mercurius Librarius*, published by John Starkey and Robert Clavell.

33 *Catalogus librorum* (Amsterdam: Daniel Elzevier, 1674).

34 See the list in B.P.M. Dongelmans, 'Elzevier addenda et corrigenda', in B.P.M. Dongelmans, etc. (eds.), *Boekverkopers van Europa. Het 17de-eeuwse Nederlandse uitgevershuis Elzevier* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000), pp. 53–58.

35 Leers issued ten numbered stock catalogues between 1691 and 1706. See also Otto S. Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers (1654–1714): uitgever & boekverkoper te Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland Universiteits Pers, 1983).

Stock catalogues could also be used to target a specific audience. Several Dutch booksellers issued catalogues of their stock in branch offices abroad: the Janssonius-Waesberge firm issued such catalogues in Denmark, Sweden, Leipzig and Danzig.<sup>36</sup> Robert Scott and Samuel Buckley in London printed specialist catalogues of books that they had imported from the European continent.<sup>37</sup> Catalogues covered specific genres like music books or cartography.<sup>38</sup> Some booksellers used a mix of approaches, like Adriaen Moetjens in The Hague, who published a range of different catalogues. These included a substantial stock catalogue of over 4,000 titles available at his shop, as well as several shorter catalogues, offering a bespoke selection of books 'printed by him, or of which he has a large number [of copies] available', and finally, inserting concise lists of books, 'to be found with him', at the end of his own publications, filling in the unused pages of the final sheet.<sup>39</sup> These short stock lists, generally less detailed than the larger international stock catalogues, became increasingly popular from the end of the seventeenth century onwards.

The second major type of book trade catalogue was the auction catalogue. If retail and stock catalogues developed rapidly as a phenomenon across Europe, printed auction catalogues developed, geographically speaking, in a more restricted manner. Books are known to have been sold at auction as part of bankruptcy and estate sales in the manuscript age and during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but specialist book auctions, accompanied by catalogues, were an invention of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.<sup>40</sup> The first extant catalogue is that of the auction of the library of Philips van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, a writer, statesman and hero of the Dutch Revolt, which

36 See chapter eleven, below.

37 *Catalogus librorum ex variis Europæ partibus advectorum* (London: Robert Scott, 1674). *Catalogus librorum præstantiorum (Ex Hollandia nuperrimè Advectorum) quibus bibliopoulum suum extruxit Samuel Buckley* (London: s.n., 1695).

38 For music books, see the *Catalogus librorum musicorum, qui venales reperiuntur in officina Ioannis à Doorn bibliopole Trajectensis* (Utrecht: Jan van Doorn, 1644), USTC 1515412. For cartography see for example several reproduced in Peter van der Krogt (ed.), *Stock catalogues of maps and atlases by Covens & Mortier* (Utrecht: HES, 1992).

39 For some examples, see *Catalogue des livres de Adrien Moetjens* ([The Hague: Adriaen Moetjens, 1682]) and *Catalogue des livres de Hollande, de France et des autres pays* (La Haye: Adriaen Moetjens, 1700). An example of one of his stock lists is found in William Temple, *Memoires de ce qui s'est passé dans la Chretienté, depuis le commencement de la guerre en 1672, jusqu'à la paix couclué en 1679* (La Haye: Adrian Moetjens, 1692), ff. V2-3.

40 On the development of the first Dutch auction catalogues, see Bert van Selm, 'The introduction of the printed book auction catalogue', *Quaerendo*, 15 (1985), pp. 16-53 and 115-149. See also Lotte Hellinga, 'Book Auctions in the Fifteenth Century', in her *Incunabula in Transit: People and Trade* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 6-19.

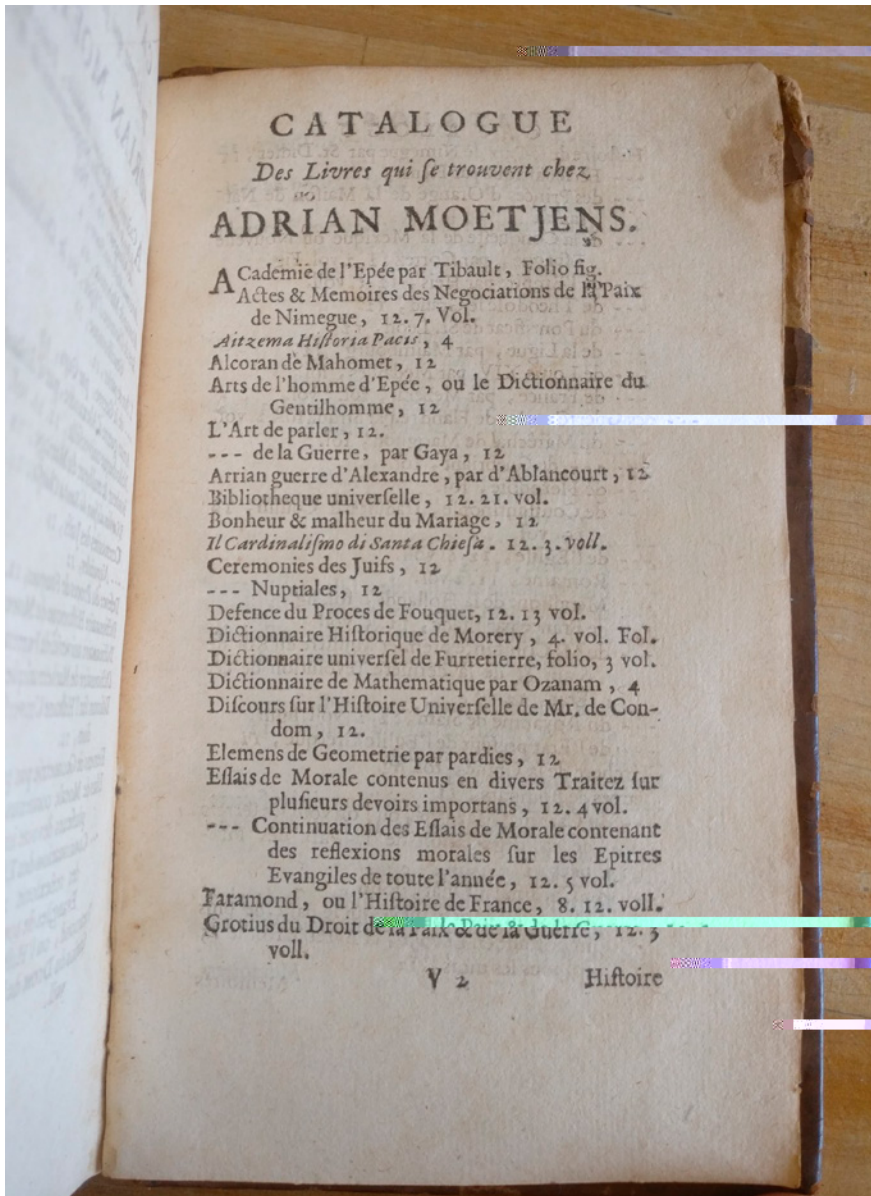


FIGURE 1.3 A four-page stock list, printed at the end of William Temple's *Memoires* by the publisher, Adriaen Moetjens (1692)  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, ARTHUR DER WEDUWEN



took place in Leiden in 1599.<sup>41</sup> Another thirty catalogues survive from Dutch book auctions from the first decade of the seventeenth century, after which the auction market developed at a swift pace. We know that some 4,000 book auctions took place in the Dutch Republic before 1700; estimates for the eighteenth century suggest that another 10,000 book auctions occurred then.<sup>42</sup>

We can assume that a printed catalogue was produced to accompany each of these auctions. Already by the 1630s, this was a municipal requirement in Leiden, the principal centre of Dutch book auctions. Other cities, including Amsterdam, issued similar by-laws. The fact that virtually all book auctions in the Dutch Republic were held by booksellers, many of whom were also printers, rather than municipal auction-masters, helps explain why catalogues were printed at such an early stage. It is also noteworthy that Dutch book auctions were managed separately from the sale of other personal possessions or goods, except for other items that might be found in a library, like globes, bookcases or prints.

The majority of Dutch book auctions took place in the province of Holland, in the cities of Leiden, Amsterdam and The Hague. Leiden, as the leading university town and an important centre of the international book trade, attracted the libraries of collectors from across the country. Yet from extant catalogues and newspaper advertisements, we also know that book auctions were held throughout the entire Dutch Republic, even in small towns of a couple of thousand inhabitants, like Tiel or Zierikzee, and that catalogues would be produced locally for these occasions too. That the Dutch were unsentimental about realising the value of their book collections was certainly the case, a tendency fostered largely by the efficiency of the book trade, and the demand for second-hand books in a highly urban and literate society.<sup>43</sup> It is nevertheless striking how slowly specialist book auctions and printed book catalogues emerged in other parts of Europe. The first printed catalogue appeared in the Southern Netherlands as early as 1614, but a busy auction market had to wait for the final decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> Before 1650, auctions with

41 *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae Philippi Marnixii Sancto-Aldegondii. Catalogue van de boecken* (Leiden: Christoffel Guyot, 1599), USTC 429893.

42 See chapter four, below. See also Arthur der Weduwen and Andrew Pettegree, *The Dutch Republic and the Birth of Modern Advertising* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 98–99. J.A. Gruys, 'Rijklof Michael van Goens. Het mysterie van de 24.200 verdwenen catalogi', in Ton Croiset van Uchelen and Hannie van Goinga (eds.), *Van pen tot laser: 31 opstellen over boek en schrift* (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1996), pp. 150–156. Hannie van Goinga, 'Books on the move: public book auctions in the Dutch Republic, 1711–1805, mainly in Amsterdam, Groningen, The Hague and Leiden', *Quaerendo*, 35 (2005), pp. 65–95.

43 Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, especially pp. 294–318.

44 See chapter three, below.

printed catalogues are known to have taken place in no more than twenty cities outside the Dutch Republic, mainly in the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, as well as Louvain and Paris. Yet in these places, auction catalogues appeared incidentally, rather than regularly. It is only from 1661 onwards that we can clearly identify a second great auction market, in Copenhagen, followed in 1676 by London.<sup>45</sup>

It is striking that the early development of the auction catalogue was predominantly a northern European phenomenon. It coincides with the general gravitation of the European book trade from the Mediterranean to northern Germany, the Dutch Republic and London, yet this is not enough to explain the appearance of hundreds of auction catalogues in Denmark, a peripheral part of the European book trade, compared to a handful for seventeenth-century Italy, or the great cities of southern Germany. It seems that in large parts of Europe, it remained common to sell entire libraries to a single buyer, or to sell them to booksellers, rather than try to realise their value on the open market. Outside the Dutch Republic, the book auction market developed only in great cities, where one could find the necessary market to offload large quantities of books at decent prices. Even in Leiden and London there was considerable concern amongst the bookselling communities about the damaging flood of cheap books that auctions might unleash, and in consequence auctions were initially strictly regulated. Once the Dutch bookselling community woke up to the possibilities afforded by auctions, not least the welcome five to ten per cent commission fee that the auctioneer took home, book auctions became regular events.

Auction catalogues can be divided into three principal types: those auctioning personal libraries, booksellers' stock, and 'anonymous collections', often a mixture of a bookseller's stock and smaller personal libraries. There were invariably variations on these, including auctions of multiple libraries sold together, of a library auction which was accompanied by a selection of bookshop stock, as well as stock auctions, restricted to members of the book trade and closed to the general public. There are also some instances, although not very numerous, of auctions of surplus stock from institutional collections.<sup>46</sup> Auction catalogues could vary greatly in size, depending on the size of the collection at auction. Some auctions took months, if not years, to conclude,

45 See chapters five and eleven, below.

46 For Copenhagen, see *Auctio Librorum Rarissimorum Variorum Linguarum & Facultatum ex Bib. Acad Hafniensis selectorum. In aedibus Thomae Bartholini Acad Bibliothecarii* (Hafniae: Gødianus, [1675]). For Gouda, see *Catalogus Librorum variorum, quorum Auctio habebitur in Templo Divi Joannis* (Gouda: Willem van der Hoeve, 1669).

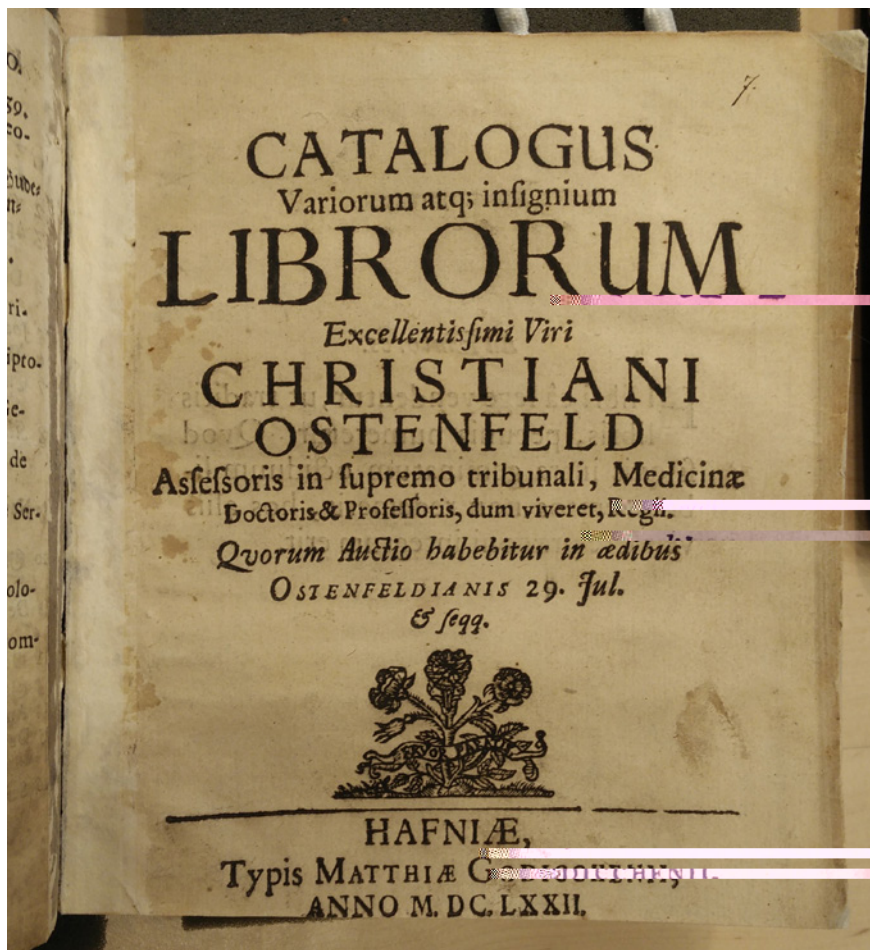


FIGURE 1.4 A typical auction catalogue. This Danish example (1672) lists the library of Christian Ostenfeld, late professor of medicine at the university of Copenhagen. *Catalogus variorum atq; insignium librorum excellentissimi viri Christiani Ostenfeld* (Hafniae: Matthiae Godicchenii, 1672). Det Kongelige Biblioteket, Copenhagen

and required multiple catalogues. Many auctions took only a single day, and required a catalogue of eight or sixteen pages. Some of the smallest book auctions that required a catalogue in the Dutch Republic were no larger than one or two hundred books; the largest libraries, on the other hand, could run into the tens of thousands of items. Most auction catalogues were published in quarto format, but over time, they were also issued as octavos and duodecimos.

Despite these differences, printed catalogues exhibited multiple common features. They announced the location, times and dates of the sale, sometimes

leaving a blank space to be filled in by hand. The title-page was often given over to a lengthy description of the contents of the collection at auction, listing the characteristics and qualities of the books. Certain phrases, like 'rare', 'beautiful', 'excellent', 'well-conditioned', 'curious' and 'wonderful' appeared as regular tropes, but the descriptions also highlighted whether a collection was rich in books in unusual languages, or was comprised predominantly of books in particular disciplines, like medicine or theology.<sup>47</sup> Auction catalogues of personal libraries would typically also devote space to a description of the late owner and their profession. Conditions of sale were often stipulated on the reverse side of the title-page; in the Dutch Republic this included a warning that the excise duty raised on the proceeds of auctions would be passed on to the buyer.

The internal structure of auction catalogues was generally very different from that of retail catalogues. One key identifying feature was the presence of lot numbers, which were introduced by Dutch auctioneers within a couple of decades of the first Marnix catalogue. Auction catalogues of personal libraries or 'anonymous' collections were most often divided by format and language, and sometimes, for the larger collections, further divided by subject classification. Auction catalogues consisting of booksellers' stock, however, were sometimes structured identically to their retail catalogues, and used an alphabetical structure. How a collection was sold could differ. In Amsterdam, auctions often started at the end of the catalogue, with the smallest formats, and worked their way to the quartos and folios, whereas this was the reverse in The Hague, as well as in England.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes catalogues specified the order of sale, but in general it can be presumed that the Amsterdam model was less common. Sadly, further specific information on the actual process of early modern auctions is frustratingly limited, and rarely divulged on the printed catalogues. Manuscript annotations on surviving copies of catalogues can offer some snippets of information.<sup>49</sup>

A word should be spared here too for those printed catalogues which were not produced as auction catalogues, but which were ultimately used as such.

47 On the often exaggerated rhetoric of book auction catalogues, see Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, "'Rarus, rarior, rarissimus" ou de la qualification exagérée des livres dans les catalogues de vente', in J. van Borm and L. Simons (eds.), *Het oude en het nieuwe boek. De oude en de nieuwe bibliotheek* (Kapellen: DNB/Pelckmans, 1988), pp. 235–240 and David McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books: Private Interest and Public Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 135–145.

48 Lankhorst, 'Dutch Book Auctions', pp. 76–77. Giles Mandelbrote, 'The Organization of Book Auctions in Late Seventeenth-Century London', in Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (eds.), *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century* (Newcastle: Oak Knoll Press, London: The British Library, 2001), pp. 15–50.

49 See chapters six, seven and thirteen, below.

Some owners of distinguished libraries had catalogues published of their collections, as gifts for their friends or benefactors; others were published after the owner's death by the family or heirs as a memorial. These practices were common in France, but also known elsewhere, including Italy.<sup>50</sup> Some of these catalogues, like that drawn up for the library of George Guillaume of Hohendorf, even included lot numbers, so that they could be used at auction; in this instance, however the entire collection was bought for the Emperor's Hofbibliothek at Vienna.<sup>51</sup> Issuing a printed catalogue in this fashion clearly also served to entice potential buyers to acquire the library in one fell swoop.

### Collecting Catalogues

By the middle of the eighteenth century, book trade catalogues were ubiquitous throughout Europe. They were so well entrenched in scholarly and literary circles that they spawned a new genre of satirical book catalogues, used as literary devices, jokes amongst friends or political polemic.<sup>52</sup> Some of these satirical catalogues, like that produced to insult Professor Pieter Burman of Utrecht, mimicked the style of an actual auction catalogue with such meticulousness that, barring the comical titles, they may be taken for an authentic catalogue.<sup>53</sup> The four different fictional book catalogues produced on the murder of the Dutch Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt in 1672 testify to the cruelty of the genre.<sup>54</sup>

Like many types of print, most auction catalogues were rendered obsolete as soon as the auction for which they have been produced was finished. Retail catalogues were also in danger of becoming redundant soon after issue, especially if a bookseller followed on with a new catalogue, or if they had sold or

50 A fine example is the catalogue drawn up for the library of Cardinal Joannes Gualterius Slusius: see François Jacques Deseine, *Bibliotheca Slusiana sive librorum quos ex omni-gena rei literariae materia Joannes Gualterus sanctae romanae ecclesiae Cardinalis Slusius Leodiensis sibi Romae congesserat* (Rome: Ex Typographia Joannis Jacobi Komarek Bohemi, 1690). On France, see chapter thirteen, below.

51 *Bibliotheca Hohendorfiana, ou Catalogue de la bibliotheque de feu monsieur George Guillaume baron de Hohendorf* (La Haye: Abraham de Hondt, 1720).

52 Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou and Paul J. Smith (eds.), *Early Modern Catalogues of Imaginary Books: A Scholarly Anthology* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

53 *Catalogus Van eenige raare, door veel moeyten by een gezogte schoone Boeken En Manuscripten; Nevens verscheyde fraaye Rariteyten, Van den alomvermaarden en Hoog-geleerden Heer Professor Petrus Burmannus* ([Utrecht, s.n., 1709]).

54 Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, pp. 316–318.

liquidated their stock. For this reason, most copies of the printed catalogues were soon discarded; in consequence, book trade catalogues are among the rarest surviving genres in the print trade. Many of the 280 stock catalogues known for the sixteenth century survive in only a single copy, some as fragments used as paste-downs in book bindings. Over 2,000 Dutch catalogues documented in Brill's *Book Sales Catalogues Online* are also unique survivors, while another 482 survive in only two copies; in contrast, only 120 catalogues in the same resource survive in more than ten copies.<sup>55</sup> Many other catalogues have disappeared entirely: thousands of auction catalogues are known to us only thanks to the newspapers in which they were advertised, or municipal archives in which they are registered, usually to document whether a registration fee had been paid.<sup>56</sup> Stock catalogues are rarely referenced in similar fashion, and are probably subject to an even heavier rate of loss than we can currently document.

We do know that book trade catalogues were distributed widely upon publication. Information on print runs is scarce, but they are likely to have increased over time. One of the earliest Dutch auction catalogues from Leiden, concerning the library of the merchant Daniel van der Meulen (1601), was printed in only 189 copies.<sup>57</sup> Fifty years later, the catalogue for the auction of André Rivet's library in 1657 was printed in 600 copies.<sup>58</sup> Another half-century later, the auction catalogue of the library of professor Paulus Hermann (1705) was printed in Leiden in 1,000 copies: for this instance we know that the auctioneer and the widow of the professor agreed that an unspecified number would be sent abroad, that the widow would receive fifty copies herself and that the remainder was for sale in the Netherlands.<sup>59</sup> Around 1651, the Frankfurt and Leipzig fair catalogues were produced in runs of 1,200 copies; they too clearly made their way around the European continent.<sup>60</sup> British auction catalogues may have circulated in smaller quantities, given that their market was largely internal. The catalogues issued for the sales of Thomas Rawlinson's books, held over a series of auctions between 1722 and 1734, were printed in around 300 copies

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55 See chapter four, below.

56 Arthur der Weduwen and Andrew Pettegree, *News, Business and Public Information. Advertisements and Announcements in Dutch and Flemish Newspapers, 1620–1675* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

57 Van Selm, 'The introduction of the printed book auction catalogue', pp. 40–41.

58 See chapter seven, below.

59 See the entry on *Book Sales Catalogues Online*, following a reference by Paul Hoftijzer to the Leiden archive, NA 1318, nr. 121.

60 See chapter ten, below.

each.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes, the title-page of an auction catalogue was also printed in a larger, separate print run, so that it could be used as a small poster or handbill.<sup>62</sup>

It seems that most British catalogues were distributed for free, a fact frequently mentioned on the title-pages. In the Netherlands, this was not the case. The interested purchaser would pay much the same for a copy of a stock or auction catalogue as for any quarto book of similar size. One can imagine though that booksellers might circulate their stock catalogues for free to other members of the book trade, in the hope that they might place orders. From newspaper advertisements, we know that auction catalogues could be found in many bookshops, usually with a network of distributors who co-operated regularly. The first advertisements for book auctions appear in Amsterdam newspapers from the 1630s; these became a staple of the Dutch press by the 1660s.<sup>63</sup> Already by 1675, some 250 booksellers from thirty-five towns had been named in Dutch newspapers as distributors of auction catalogues. Even if most auctions took place in Holland, book collectors from every part of the country could find a local bookshop that stocked these catalogues; Dutch catalogues were also regularly available in the Southern Netherlands, northern Germany and London.<sup>64</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, some Dutch book auction catalogues, like that of the library of Count Wassenaar Obdam, were advertised for sale in over thirty cities outside the Dutch Republic.<sup>65</sup> In London, auctions were also frequently advertised in newspapers, and it is clear that no major auction took place without a fanfare of publicity in multiple papers.<sup>66</sup>

Those book trade catalogues that do survive today also offer us hints about their widespread distribution. It is remarkable that over three quarters of all extant Dutch catalogues cannot be located in the Netherlands. They are to be found predominantly in libraries abroad: in Germany, Denmark, Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia. The catalogues made their way to these destinations

61 Mandelbrote, 'The Organization of Book Auctions', p. 28.

62 Van Selm, 'The introduction of the printed book auction catalogue', pp. 117–118.

63 Der Weduwen and Pettegree, *The Dutch Republic and the Birth of Modern Advertising*, chapters three, six and seven. Id, *News, Business and Public Information*, p. 44 for the first advertisement, and the indices for a full overview.

64 For a nice example, see *Catalogus Rarissimorum & vere Insignium in omni materia, Instructissimae Bibliothecae Clarissimi & Consultissimi Viri D.W. Snellonii* (Leiden: Petrus van der Aa, 1691), ff. \*2.

65 Lankhorst, 'Dutch book auctions', p. 67.

66 Michael Harris, 'Newspaper Advertising for Book Auctions before 1700', in Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (eds.), *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century* (Newcastle: Oak Knoll Press, London: The British Library, 2001), pp. 1–14.

early in their life, as tools for book dealers and as reference works for book collectors. Surviving copies are invariably bound together with other catalogues, making up substantial volumes of five, ten or thirty catalogues. That the catalogues were bound in such *Sammelbände* indicates that some copies were deemed worth keeping. Clearly, the further away from their place of publication, the rarer and therefore more valuable such catalogues became. Dutch catalogues easily available in Leiden and Amsterdam were not so in Stockholm or Rome. In early modern Europe, there was undoubtedly a commercial market for a certain class of book catalogue, which included the catalogues of institutional libraries. The catalogues of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the university library of Leiden, and the city library of Amsterdam, all of which went through several editions in the course of the seventeenth century, were frequently found in the collections of scholars, as well as available for sale at bookshops.

To those like Duke Augustus the Younger of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, who gathered together an extraordinary library in Wolfenbüttel, collecting and preserving book trade catalogues was an important means of following the market. He used the catalogues to identify desired editions, so that he could pass on relevant instructions to his book agents, spread around the major cities of Europe.<sup>67</sup> Humbler collectors could keep a catalogue for similar reasons. In 1651, the Groningen University student Anton von Dorth, from Wesel, bought a copy of the auction catalogue of the Amsterdam bookseller Hendrick Laurensz, whose stock had been sold in the summer of 1649. This substantial catalogue, listing 8,418 titles, was interleaved by Van Dorth, and used as his own private library catalogue, to note books that he wished to acquire, and as a comparative price list, so that he could purchase a title at the most competitive rate possible.<sup>68</sup> Collectors used auction catalogues in particular to study the market. It is for this reason that so many auction catalogues survive today with handwritten prices in the margins. Some of these seem to have been drawn up during the auction, and display a rushed writing style; others are extremely neat, and clearly transcribed after the auction took place.

Some auction catalogues became so valued for their use as reference tools, that they were reprinted after the auction had taken place. This was most

67 Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer (ed.), *A Treasure House of Books. The Library of Duke August of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), especially the article by Helmar Härtel, 'Duke August and his Book Agents', pp. 105–118. See also Marika Keblusek, *Boeken in de Hofstad. Haagse boekcultuur in de Gouden Eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), pp. 246–267.

68 Gerda C. Huisman, 'Inservio studiis Antonii a Dorth Vesaliensis: The many uses of a seventeenth-century book sales catalogue', *Quaerendo*, 41 (2011), pp. 276–285.



notably the case with the catalogue of the library of the Dutch scholar Nicolaas Heinsius, which went through several editions in 1682 and 1683, many copies of which survive today interleaved, as well as annotated with prices.<sup>69</sup> The auction catalogue of the library of Jacques Oisel, professor at Groningen, was first printed in 1687, and then reprinted in 1690, 1692 and 1698.<sup>70</sup> Incidentally, thanks to Oisel's catalogue, we know that he was an avid collector of book catalogues himself. He owned dozens of auction and stock catalogues, divided amongst twenty *Sammelbände*.<sup>71</sup>

### Reading a Catalogue

This volume contains a rich array of articles which reflect on, and use book trade catalogues as historical sources. They shed new light on book trade practices, on patterns of book collecting and on the classification and organisation of knowledge. The myriad uses of catalogues make them an essential source for the historian who seeks to understand European society in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For that reason we should also reflect on limitations of book trade catalogues: what do they not tell us?

The primary aim of catalogues is to describe books, but the standard or quality of description varies considerably throughout the early modern period and between classes of catalogues. In general, it can be expected that book trade catalogues, as tools of marketing, describe books in more specific terms than manuscript probate inventories, which include books only for their general material value.<sup>72</sup> Household inventories often note only 'a number of books', distributed amongst various rooms, with no further details; when they are more fully described, this usually has to do with the value of their bindings. More extensive probate inventories list books by author, title and size,

69 John A. Sibbald, 'The *Heinsiana* – Almost a Seventeenth-Century Universal Short Title Catalogue', in Walsby and Constantinidou, *Documenting the Early Modern Book World*, pp. 141–159.

70 See Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, pp. 292–293.

71 *Bibliotheca Oizeliana* (Leiden: Jacobus Hackius, 1687), pp. 165–167. For a further well-known early example, see Angela Nuovo, 'Gian Vincenzo Pinelli's collection of catalogues of private libraries in sixteenth-century Europe', *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 82 (2007), pp. 129–144.

72 Giorgio Riello, '"Things seen and unseen": The material culture of early modern inventories and their representation of domestic interiors', in Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern Things: Objects and their histories, 1500–1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 125–150. Malcolm Walsby, 'Book Lists and Their Meaning', in Walsby and Constantinidou (eds.), *Documenting the Early Modern Book World*, pp. 1–24.

the minimal qualities of description that one can expect to find in book trade catalogues. Many printed catalogues, however, also provide information on dates and places of publication, crucial information when one is attempting to identify a specific edition of a text. A common practice in Dutch auction catalogues was to provide high-quality descriptions of this sort for the first half of the catalogue, listing the expensive books, the folios and quartos, with some care, but not troubling with similar detail when describing octavos, duodecimos and smaller books, since they would have sold for much lower prices. In Danish auction catalogues, high-quality descriptions are often provided throughout, an indication that these books were judged to have accrued additional value in a smaller book market.<sup>73</sup> In all auction catalogues, least space is devoted to the description of bound volumes of pamphlets and other 'packets' or 'bundles' of books. These are often listed in vague terms, sometimes as numbered lots, often with no more indication of their content beyond the description of 'another bundle with fifty various satirical pamphlets, as well as some ordinances'.<sup>74</sup> These descriptions are especially tantalising, as volumes of news pamphlets, political tracts, theological controversies, orations, wedding pamphlets, book catalogues, academic disputations and government ordinances are likely to have contained items that do not survive today.

Stock catalogues maintain different standards again: the famous catalogues issued by booksellers like Daniel Elzevier have a high quality of description throughout, for all books, but tend to shorten the titles of the works considerably, in order to save paper for a catalogue that needs to list thousands of titles. Stock catalogues also avoid the complications of auction catalogues in that they do not generally feature different titles that have been bound together. The standards of description for a collective volume that contains three or four different texts, potentially published in very different years and places, can vary significantly. In general, the highest quality of description is found in those catalogues marketing distinguished collections. Catalogues listing the libraries of famous professors often indicate whether the books have been annotated by the owner, or indeed by other celebrated scholars. The presence of numerous illustrations or rich bindings may also be emphasised, although this is a feature that only develops towards the end of the seventeenth century. As antiquarian interest expanded in the eighteenth century, some book catalogues devoted lengthy descriptions to individual titles, taking up several lines to extol the qualities and rarity of items on offer.<sup>75</sup>

73 See chapter eleven, below.

74 *Catalogus variorum & insignium librorum, praesertim medicorum* (Leiden: Elzeviriana, 1628), USTC 1509578, p. 27. This volume is in a series of 67 other miscellaneous volumes.

75 McKitterick, *Invention of Rare Books*, especially chapters nine to eleven.

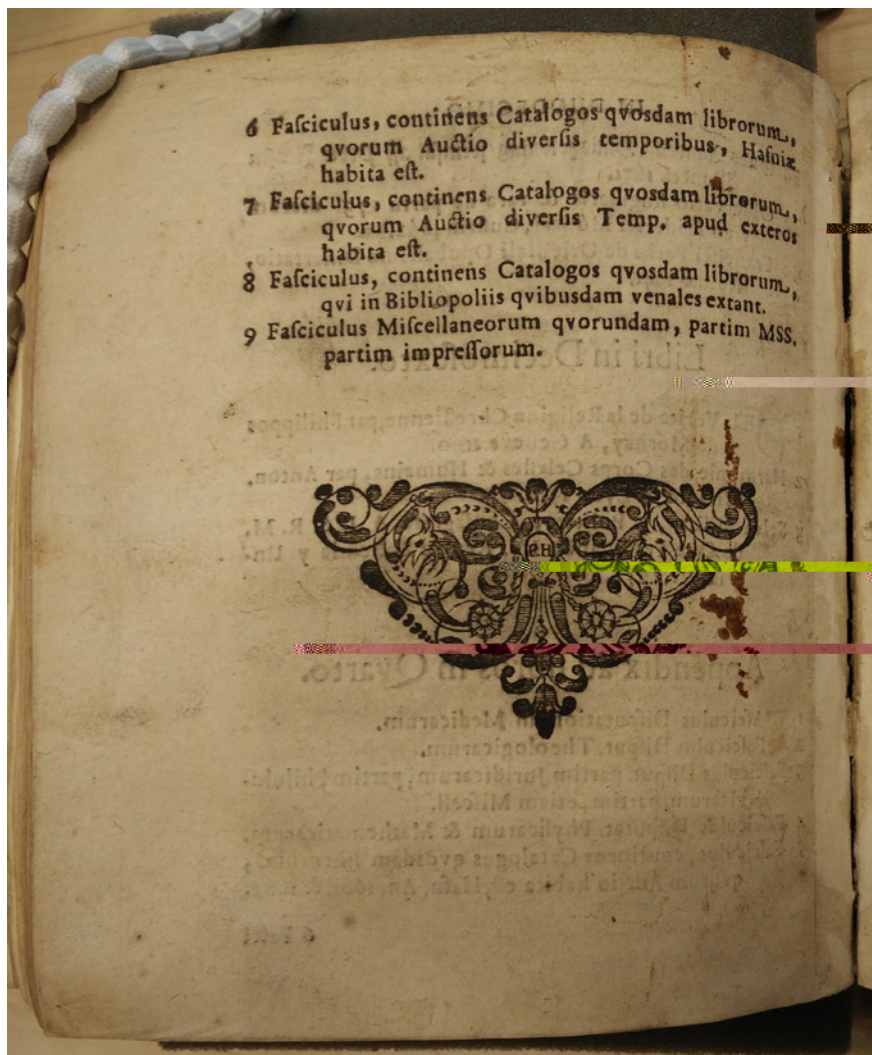


FIGURE 1.5 Many auction catalogues contain at their end a selection of bound volumes of pamphlets. Their contents are sadly not enumerated in full. Final page of the *Catalogus variorum atq; insignium librorum excellentissimi viri Christiani Ostenfeld* (Hafniae: Matthiae Godicchenii, 1672). Det Kongelige Biblioteket, Copenhagen

Even the most detailed book trade catalogues leave some blind spots for the historian. For stock catalogues, it is rare to find information on the number of copies available with the bookseller. This is one crucial disadvantage of catalogues when compared to inventories. Listing the number of books in a shop is a standard of shop inventories: thus we know that in 1662, upon his death, the Amsterdam printer Paulus Aerts van Ravesteyn held over 10,000 Bibles,

17,000 New Testaments and 25,000 psalm books in his shop.<sup>76</sup> In a printed catalogue, these items would be described at the edition level, and no information on copies would be supplied. The number of copies is only found on catalogues when these were added by hand. The unique surviving copies of the stock catalogues issued by the Janssonius-Waesberge firm in Danzig from the 1680s onwards note the number of copies in stock, as they were used as evidence in a court case that came before the Court of Holland.<sup>77</sup> In this case, as all others, stock catalogues offer only a reflection of a moment, and cannot tell us how many copies were sold in the years following their publication. The fact that many of the titles listed in Daniel Elzevier's stock auction catalogue of 1681 also appeared in his 1674 stock catalogue, does not elucidate whether this concerns the same copy of a book, or whether Elzevier may have had two, five or ten copies in 1674, but only one in 1681. It is also worth considering whether books listed in retail catalogues are actually present in the physical book shop, whether they are kept in distant warehouses, or if they are not in possession of the bookseller at all, but they are only advertising that they can acquire the book for their customers.

Annotated prices, one of the most interesting aspects of many book trade catalogues, should also be treated with caution. It is not uncommon to find copies of the same edition sold for very different prices at auction. According to annotated catalogues, four copies of the Dutch translation of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1667) were sold at auctions in the Netherlands in 1696, 1701 and 1714, for 63, 34, 33 and 19 stuivers respectively.<sup>78</sup> The difference in price here may have much to do with the conditions of the copies, the bindings, but possibly also with the competitive nature of the auctions. The data provides us with a range of prices, but not with definitive answers; especially when multiple lots are sold together for a single price. Was this at the prompting of the auctioneer, or the buyer? And if we know that a buyer paid ten shillings for three separate books, how does that payment break down between the items?

We should also exercise care in drawing conclusions about an individual owner's book reading preferences on the basis of the catalogue of their library. Ownership of a book does not imply readership, nor that the owner bought the

76 M.M. Kleerkooper and W.P. Van Stockum, *De boekhandel te Amsterdam voornamelijk in de 17e eeuw: biographische en geschiedkundige aantekeningen* (2 vols., Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1914–1916), pp. 587–610.

77 The catalogues are kept in The National Archives in The Hague, Civiele processtukken van den Hove van Holland, H. 39, 1725, Van Hemert-Coelemey.

78 Examples taken from the auction catalogues of Rippert van Groenendijck (1696), Josias van de Capelle (1696), Karel Willem van Valkenburgh (1701) and Gerardus de Jong (1714).

book: they may have inherited it or received it as a gift.<sup>79</sup> The auction catalogue may also not represent the entire owner's library. The survival of the inventory of Daniel van der Meulen's book collection, as well as the auction catalogue of his library, reveals that eighty-two books were kept out of the auction, because his children wished to retain them.<sup>80</sup> The auction catalogue of Sibrandus Lubbertus's library (1625) specified that not all books from his collection were being sold, for the same reason.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, books listed in an auction catalogue of a personal library may never have been owned by that person. The 'salting' of auctions with additional slow-selling stock was an established part of the auction trade, which, from the early eighteenth century, was even legalised in Leiden. Sometimes auctioneers made very clear that they had added supplemental stock, including unbound books, which they listed in an appendix. In other instances, the books were simply mixed in. Thanks to surviving account books, Pierre Delsaerdt found that the Louvain bookseller and auctioneer J.F. van Overbeke salted his auctions liberally with books that had no connection to the owner named on the title-page.<sup>82</sup> The association with a famous individual was stretched beyond credulity by the London bookseller Moses Pitt, who held an auction in 1678 declaring that he was selling books from the library of the Utrecht professor Gisbertus Voetius. Pitt's catalogue comprised 8,000 lots, while the first part of Voetius's library, which had recently been sold in the Netherlands, had been no larger than 1,400 lots.<sup>83</sup> Pitt's expansive claim seems to have been based on a handful of titles he had received from this sale. Other auctioneers, like Pieter van der Aa, went as far as to invent a book collector, 'W. Snellonius', whose library he auctioned in 1691.<sup>84</sup>

Deliberate misinformation of this sort was arguably rare, confined to such scandalous cases as that of Isaac Vossius, the Dutch scholar who auctioned off a part of his library, and whose nephew boasted later that he had deliberately falsified some descriptions in the auction catalogue in order to raise higher

79 For some examples, see chapter seven, below.

80 Lankhorst, 'Dutch Book Auctions', p. 74. See also chapter six, below.

81 *Catalogus Librorum, Qui Ex Bibliotheca Reverendi & Celeberrimi Viri D. Sibrandi Lubberti Publica auctione Franekeræ* (Franeker: Feddrick Heyns, 1625), USTC 1122248. With thanks to Forrest Strickland for the reference.

82 Pierre Delsaerdt, *Suam quisque bibliothecam. Boekhandel en particulier boekenbezit aan de oude Leuvense universiteit, 16de–18de eeuw* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2001), pp. 286–232.

83 Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *Bookshop of the World*, p. 311.

84 *Catalogus Rarissimorum & vere Insignium in omni materia, Instructissimæ Bibliothecæ Clarissimi & Consultissimi Viri D<sup>o</sup>. W. Snellonii* (Leiden: Petrus van der Aa, 1691).

prices.<sup>85</sup> Simple compositing errors, crediting a book with a wrong publication date, are more common, as are titles misspelled in haste. Such incidents are frustrating, but they should not limit our engagement with book trade catalogues as sources for the study of early modern book production and circulation.<sup>86</sup> Catalogues, like all historical sources, are defined by the unique circumstances that led to their production and survival. Yet if a single book catalogue does not allow us to look into the soul of an individual collector, taken in aggregate the catalogue data does offer a uniquely valuable perspective on the book world. We find in these volumes an extraordinary wealth of information about which books were most coveted by collectors, and, in the publishers' stock catalogues, which books were most valued for everyday use. We find forgotten authors who were contemporary bestsellers, and texts which are now much admired that were largely ignored on first publication. We can retrieve from oblivion large numbers of books not recorded in national bibliographies that we can now definitively prove were published and sold, often far from their core markets. We can demonstrate which texts found a broad international readership, and which were confined to a more parochial audience. And we have a much better sense of what genres kept the presses turning, than if we rely purely on the information from surviving editions.

These expansive interpretative possibilities are all the more remarkable when one considers that in their own time book sales catalogues were regarded as so disposable, and have received relatively little scholarly attention since. Yet as scholars of the book, we have more to lose by ignoring them than to take them in good faith, and work with them with the same probabilistic empiricism that we bring to all documents from past societies.

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85 Astrid C. Balsem, 'Collecting the Ultimate Scholar's Library: the *Bibliotheca Vossiana*', in Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (eds.), *Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) between Science and Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 281–309, here p. 281.

86 Arthur der Weduwen, 'Lost and found. On the trail of the forgotten literature of the Dutch Golden Age', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis*, 27 (2020), pp. 45–65, here pp. 57–65.