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Malcolm Walsby

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MALCOLM WALSBY

*THE BOOK AND THE TEXT. DEFINING
THE SAMMELBAND*

Putting the book back into book history

The past few decades have seen a substantial increase in the research devoted to the printed book in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries. National and international bibliographies in electronic form have reshaped our knowledge of what was printed and has survived during the first centuries of the printing press. Studies of specific textual themes or authors, analysis of the output of certain publishers and printers, and papers and monographs on specific types of printed texts and images have thrived. Under the umbrella designation of the history of the book, the publishing boom surrounding this field of scholarship has been facilitated by the creation of new endeavours such as Brill's *Library of the Written Word*. University courses have abounded, aided by the fact that the subject is acceptable in multiple curricula, and university chairs explicitly labelled "History of the book" have also become commonplace.

The research and teaching undertaken has concentrated on the text. Projects have enabled us to understand what was printed, where and by whom the copies were produced. Illustrations and engravings have been studied both in order to understand the artists and artisans behind their creation, and how their insertion in various editions can be interpreted. The place of the author has continued to be at the heart of many studies. Interaction with the workshops and editors has, in particular, attracted the interest of scholars. Our appreciation of the process of correcting texts has benefitted from the examination of manuscript sources, of printed errata, and of errors that are still visible today in extant exemplars¹. All this research has considerably improved our

¹ See, most recently, *Printing and misprinting. A companion to mistakes and in-house corrections in Renaissance Europe (1450-1650)*, edited by G. DELLA ROCCA DE CANDAL - A. GRAFTON - P. SACHET, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023.

understanding of the printed text, but it has left aside the actual creation of the codex. As a result, the *Sammelband*, its nature and role in the development of the book has attracted very little interest. So much so, that it seems necessary to explain why this has been the case, how it became ubiquitous during the first century of print, and how it can be defined.

A lot of scholarship has involved new material analysis. However, in most cases, this has been a bibliographical approach of the text block that has rarely ventured beyond its texts and images. Whilst such research has reaped rich rewards, it has generally meant that, paradoxically, the book itself has been in great part relegated to a supporting role – if it is mentioned at all. Early modern book history has been about the text and its edition rather than about books. The production, circulation and reading of copies has often been described and analysed in an abstract manner; the physical aspects of the volume, such as its binding, are generally overlooked. Indeed, most histories of the development of the printed book barely mention such questions. This disregard for the object is problematic: the first thing one notices about a book is not the text, but its shape, size and nature². These physical features define how a text was approached, but also how it was read and how it was valued and considered by its owner.

Individual copies have been looked at in some detail when they are exceptional. The extraordinary bindings of kings and bibliophiles have always been the source of many studies. But they are in no way representative of the place of the book in early modern society and tell us very little indeed about how books were usually preserved or read. Of more interest, the analysis of the ownership of copies has generated a better appreciation of the movement of books. The study of provenance and of personal libraries has led to the publication of articles, monographs and online databases³. Yet even in these instances, the definition of provenance remains narrow. Scholars and librarians working on such projects seem to be concentrated on using textual or iconographic evidence in order to link the copy of a text to a named owner. The concept of provenance, however, is much broader and can be used to determine where a book was at any given time during its life and thus enable us to reconstruct the chronology of its movement and ownership. Such analysis depends on a differ-

² See G. Thomas Tanselle's discussion of the comic strip *Nancy* and the response elicited by the phrase «Describe the book», with its different levels of significance: *Literature and artifacts*, Charlottesville, The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1998, p. 130.

³ See, for instance, D. PEARSON, *Provenance research in book history. A handbook*, New and revised edition, Oxford, The Bodleian Library - New Castle, Oak Knoll Press, 2019, and the *Material Evidence in Incunabula* database: <<https://www.cerl.org/resources/mei/main>>.

ent approach that uses information taken from techniques, material, and other physical details used both in the creation and the transformations of the volume over time.

The lack of studies of this type may be in part explained by the fact that many scholars have come to the history of the book through their pre-existing interest in the texts and images that they contain. In other words, they consider the book from the inside out: the text has paratexts, a publishing and printing context with its layout, typographic setting and illustrations. It also has reader interaction with its marginalia and underlining as well as ownership encapsulated by the possessor's note and its integration into a wider private or public library. This move from written or figurative content to intellectual, economic and political, as well as social context creates a bias that leaves further material aspects on the periphery of scholarly interest.

This approach is encouraged and abetted by the increasingly influential digital ecosystem in which research is now undertaken. For most researchers, books are principally reached through online catalogues that offer as basic search criteria the author and the title of a given printed item. Very often a search cannot be carried out without filling in one of these fields and even when this is done, investigations are hampered by cataloguing practices that prioritise description of a text and its production rather than the book itself. In the vast majority of cases, unless there is something that has been identified as being exceptional about a volume, material aspects are simply not described at all.

This is a historical bias. The move from describing the book to recording the text does not date from the digital age but was a consequence of the rise of the printed book itself. Inventories of manuscript codices from the late Middle Ages and those drawn up after the generalisation of printing in the Sixteenth century adopt very different approaches⁴. The digital age has further reinforced this phenomenon. Consulting catalogues at a distance is now the norm and initial identification and research is conducted far away from the libraries in which the items are kept. Remote research has become all the more commonplace as a result of sweeping digitisation programmes carried out throughout the world that have made millions of these books accessible online. It is no longer necessary to handle books in order to see their contents. Such long distance consultation has played a vital part in developing scholarship and opening new research paths, but it has also alienated the reader from the book.

⁴ This was undoubtedly connected to the issues posed by having to deal with what Ann Blair calls the "multitude of books": see her *Reading strategies for coping with information overload ca. 1550-1700*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», 64 (2003), pp. 11-28.

Through digitisation, the materiality of the book is unwittingly hidden from the reader. Such an approach creates obvious problems. The size of an imprint is standardised as all books appear to be the same height on the screen. The nature of the paper used is impossible to determine. Not only are watermarks, chain and wire lines all but invisible, but vital evidence such as the quality, thickness, rigidity and sizing of paper (or indeed flesh or hair sides for parchment), that is instinctively perceived book in hand, is impossible to detect. Bindings, flyleaves, spines and edges are poorly digitised, if at all. Sewing structures, binding waste, endbands and other vital sources of information as to when, where and how a codex was formed and repaired are simply not available to the reader. Digital projects have concentrated on content, mirroring and amplifying the existing bias. They mostly pay no attention to the physical structure of the early printed book. The numbering of images is sometimes generated automatically, meaning that going to a specific leaf in a large volume or examining the pages in the same form is unnecessarily complex. Such omissions are particularly problematic for early incunabula. The books photographed have naturally been linked to pre-existing catalogues and therefore access to items has been determined by the metadata they contain. In other words, the text defines how you get access and what is visible. Digitised Sammelbände are presented one item at a time, generally without links to the other items in the volume⁵.

Such limitations have helped channel book history research away from the materiality of the book. As a result, the various forms that the codex took during the first centuries of print have been understudied. If a series of articles published by Nicholas Pickwoad has thrown valuable light and work on incunabula bindings has progressed, such studies have unfortunately so far had limited impact⁶. The understanding of the role of the physical encasement of a text in conditioning and explaining its use has yet to be fully researched. This is particularly true of one of the ubiquitous objects of the Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-centuries library, the Sammelband. Defined by the sewing together of quires of different texts, it was commonplace in the manuscript world and,

⁵ This is touched upon in A. DLABAČOVÁ, *The digital incunable: opening or closing the book through digitization*, «TXT», 8 (2022), pp. 139-151.

⁶ Nicholas Pickwoad's bibliography on the subject is extensive. See, in particular, his *The interpretation of bookbinding structure. An examination of Sixteenth-century bindings in the Ramey Collection in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, «The Library», s. 6, 17 (1995), pp. 209-249. His much awaited volume: *Coming to terms: the description of historical bookbindings*, is due to be published by Bodleian Library Publishing. See also M. FOOT, *Bookbinders at work. Their roles and methods*, London, British Library - New Castle, Oak Knoll Press, 2006.

with the exponential rise of textual production with the advent of printing, it developed still further in the early modern period. With its own codes and peculiarities, its study is revealing of many aspects of the printed book, from its inception, production and publication, through its ownership, use and conservation over the centuries.

The advent and rise of the printed Sammelband

Preserving long texts was, from late antiquity onwards, mainly done by creating a codex. Sheets of parchment, and later of paper, or sometimes mixed, were folded to form quires or gatherings that were assembled and sewn together in order to form large text blocks that were then covered by a binding. The creation of these codices was an expensive affair. Requiring both strong materials and skilled labour, they represented a significant investment, even if they were not adorned with complex decorations, ivory, semi-precious stones or gold or silver. Such costs encouraged owners to amortise the investment in a binding by including within it more than one text. These volumes were created even if the quires had been produced separately without the express intent of adding them to other gatherings of text. Beyond economic considerations, there was also a structural logic in a world where the preservation of manuscripts was of prime importance. It was difficult to create very thin but robust codices for short texts and, more generally, thicker volumes were more likely to survive repeated use and encouraged better preservation. It also saved considerable space in early modern libraries – not to mention the specific case of chained libraries in which volumes had to be large, generally with wooden boards, to carry the attachment to the chain.

The advent of printing had a well-documented impact on price of texts as well as on the form and materiality of bindings, but did not result in the rarefaction of Sammelbände. The exponential increase in the number of copies produced required the creation of many more codices. Additionally, the lower costs involved in the production of each item meant that the expense of creating traditional sturdy Medieval bindings became disproportionately high when compared to the quires they encased. These costs naturally drove binders to seek cheaper materials and simpler techniques in order to limit their expenditure⁷. Wooden boards were gradually replaced by cardboard ones that were not only less expensive, but also no longer required the same quality of sewing

⁷ J. A. SZIRMAI, *The archaeology of Medieval bookbinding*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999, p. 173.

structure to carry their lesser weight. Despite such changes, the practice of inserting more than one text inside a single binding did not disappear; on the contrary, the number of such volumes rose significantly.

The increase in the number of multi-text volumes was a direct consequence of the quantity of copies being produced. But there were also other reasons for their success as a book form connected to the comparative costs of the printed sheet. The publication of a series of relatively cheap editions that could be acquired by a moderately wealthy reader required an as inexpensive solution for their binding. Having already invested their limited income in the paper or vellum quires, many owners would often have had little left over to pay for the sewing, the materials and the workmanship necessary for the creation of a volume. More wealthy possessors could use the money saved to buy other imprints and expand their collection. Furthermore, the availability of a greater number of texts also meant that more items were bought than before the advent of the presses. As a result, some readers spent more on books than they would have previously, so much so that they often no longer had any money left for further acquisitions⁸. In such circumstances, it was understandable that they sought to reduce costs by requesting that multiple texts be inserted in the same binding.

Another consequence of printing was a change in the physical relationship between the text and the sheet. Indeed, the move from manuscript to print had an impact on the space required for an edition. In order to produce accessible items, pages were often crammed with text which good typeface made legible even when the letters were small. Early incunabula followed manuscript tradition in having very wide margins, but as printing developed the text area expanded and margins were reduced. As a result, a printed text frequently necessitated fewer sheets than its manuscript counterpart – especially when the publisher sought to minimise costs. The number of sheets required for printed folio editions of the Decameron, for instance, dropped by half within the space of around twenty years⁹. Such changes meant that fewer quires were required

⁸ See Anton Koberger's comments on the outlays made by priests and the need to find new markets, quoted in F. EISERMANN, *A golden age? Monastic printing houses in the Fifteenth century*, in *Print culture and peripheries in Early Modern Europe. A contribution to the history of printing and the book trade in small European and Spanish cities*, edited by B. RIAL COSTAS, Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 37-67: 38.

⁹ The 1471 Venetian edition by Christophorus Valdarfer (GW 4441) and the 1472 Mantuan edition by Petrus Adam de Michaelibus (GW 4442) necessitated respectively 134 and 132 leaves. In contrast, the Venetian editions by Johannes and Gregorius de Gregoriis in 1492 (GW 4449) and Manfredus de Bonellis in 1498 (GW 4450) required respectively only 72 and 71 sheets.

and there was more scope for inserting a greater number of items inside the same binding. A final related incentive was the change in the appearance of the book. As has been noted by Neil Harris, the size of the books produced changed during the incunabula period. Smaller formats became more common, the dominant sheet-size became Chancery rather than Royal or Median, and works that were previously produced as large folios became quartos or even octavos¹⁰. This change in format had a profound impact not just on production practices, but also on the cost of an edition, the possible girth of a codex and how publishers conceived the items they had printed.

Producing smaller volumes altered the way that texts were printed but so did the idea they could be inserted into Sammelbände. Publishers were generally booksellers who were fully aware of the need to transform stacks of printed quires into bound codices – indeed, they often employed the binders who created the volumes in their own shops¹¹. As the art of printing and bookselling gained in maturity, the finality of what they were selling influenced how they produced it within their workshops. They perceived that an edition could be published with two types of buyers in mind: those who wished to keep and use the edition alone, perhaps initially unbound, and those who sought to create larger volumes by adding other items. The realisation that they could appeal to a wider market and encourage further sales affected the organisation of each edition. Publishers began to think of which texts could be put together in order to facilitate the creation of the codices. The increase in compatible editions presented them with an opportunity as booksellers to suggest further acquisitions to their clientele. Additionally, it incited them to place more emphasis on the publication of short editions of a few quires.

Publishers could also alter the layout and presentation of their output to suit their insertion into Sammelbände. This can perhaps help explain some of the crucial changes observed in early imprints initially produced with very little paratext or visual codification to aid the reader to use or recognise the main text. For instance, by adding title pages at the beginning of each edition – a process that would continue to evolve throughout the later incunabula period – they made each item stand out within a volume and helped the read-

¹⁰ N. HARRIS, *Paper and watermarks as bibliographical evidence*, Lyon, Institut d'histoire du livre, 2017, p. 39. On the increase and decrease of different formats, see M. WALSBY, *Le format et le livre imprimé aux XV^e, XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, in *Le monde de l'imprimé en Europe occidentale (vers 1470-vers 1680)*, édité par J. ALAZARD *et al.*, Paris, Bréal, 2021, pp. 77-91.

¹¹ M. WALSBY, *L'imprimé en Europe occidentale, 1470-1680*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020, p. 81.

er identify the starting point of each edition¹². The need to insert them into the same volume also encouraged visual resemblance between editions that a publisher might consider similar in order to help promote their sale within the context of *Sammelband* creation. The idea of compatibility meant producing comparable works in the same format, but could also extend to the repeated use of certain woodblocks, types, or indeed layout. Without necessarily stretching to the creation of a coherent series, in the manner of Aldus Manutius's ground-breaking *Libelli portatiles in formam enchiridii*, publishers could conceive a number of titles that could easily be collected, mixed and matched, by prospective buyers depending on their interests and taste¹³.

Astute Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century publishers learnt from their commercial experience of how binders, at the request of owners, copied long-standing manuscript practices and aggregated different texts into codices. They began to produce editions that encouraged the development of printed *Sammelbände* – a process can be seen as fitting into a virtuous commercial cycle for publishers built around the development of this codex form. This cycle is derived from the association of the economic and financial characteristics of brochure production, on the one hand, and of the nature of retail sales and binding creation by booksellers, on the other. Printing short items required little initial investment as the main cost, the paper used, was low. Because they required a small number of quires, few sheets needed to be typeset, proofed and printed. As a result, the production of a print-run of a thousand copies would only occupy a press for a few days. The edition could therefore easily be inserted into the broader planning of the workshop's activity alongside larger costlier projects which required more time. This rapid output ensured also that the copies could reach retailers swiftly and ensure a quick return on the initial investment. As a result, the edition could be sold cheaply, which in turn broadened their commercial appeal to both less wealthy readers and to those who could afford additional incidental acquisitions.

This wider market was further increased by the malleable nature of the editions. Short texts produced alone rather than part of larger compendia of works gave owners more licence to create their own anthologies. By predefining connections between different texts, both by the very fact of their association and by the structural organisation of an edition, publishers could render a

¹² For an analysis of the Francophone editions, see M. WALSBY, *The creation of the title page in French incunabula*, «Gutenberg Jahrbuch», 95 (2022), pp. 26-34.

¹³ On this see N. HARRIS, *Aldus and the making of the myth (or what did Aldus really do?)*, in *Aldo Manuzio. La costruzione del mito*, a cura di M. INFELISE, Venezia, Marsilio, 2016, pp. 346-386: 343-344 and 373-374.

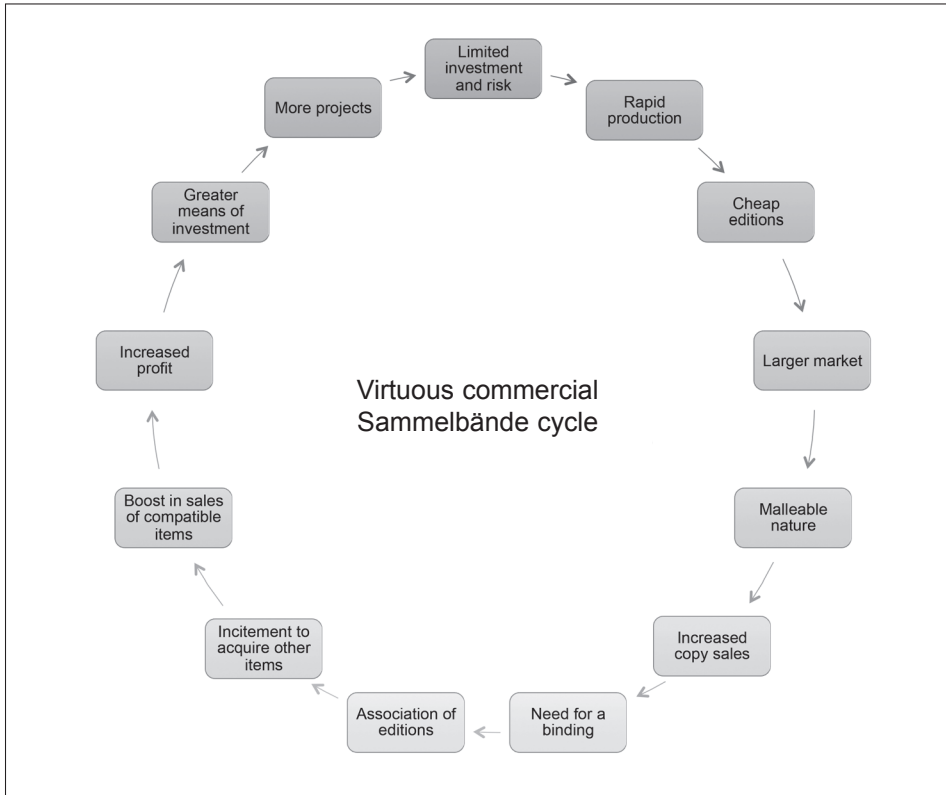
publication less attractive. Such imprints potentially duplicated texts already possessed by a reader, increased the cost of acquisition, and limited a reader's ability to insert the work into a personally conceived context. The greater attractiveness of the short edition further broadened the market and led to increased copy sales. Though they could (and in many cases undoubtedly were) used and kept alone, the need to protect and preserve the item incited buyers to seek to have them bound. The physical limitations of these works formed of a few quires encouraged the creation of the multi-edition volumes for their conservation. Purchasers would associate other imprints to the one they had acquired – something publishers could promote by having editions that shared a similar layout and physical characteristics. In an age in which shopping practices evolved, the question of how people bought editions thus naturally had an impact on how they were produced¹⁴. The development of a progressively more consumer-conscious publication strategy helped promote the purchase of extra compatible items and further boosted sales.

The increased profit derived from the rising number of copies sold, initially received by the retail bookseller but in part also passed back on to the publisher, ensured that the latter could invest more in the creation of other similar editions. Their production and dissemination would naturally also increase the number of compatible alternatives for potential buyers that facilitated further the fashioning of Sammelbände. This simple virtuous cycle (fig. 1), encountered great success and led to the binding of vast quantities of such volumes throughout Europe during the first two centuries of print.

The extent of the success of this book form has been somewhat disguised by the fact that later owners have often dismantled Sammelbände. Volumes that contained texts that became collectible during the following centuries were particularly prone to disassembling. Bibliophiles had little interest in preserving modest bindings in which the edition they wanted was originally included. In order to showcase their copy, they preferred to have the item rebound alone in a binding that mirrored their own tastes. Not only did this involve the dismantling of the original volume, but in most cases outwards signs of the Sammelband were removed: indications were erased from title pages and tell-tale signs on flyleaves or edges were lost. Such enterprises have had a dramatic effect on what we know about certain types of Sammelbände.

Literary Sammelbände have a poor survival rate as these works were particularly sought after by collectors, notably in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-centuries. Most of these items were not preserved in institutional librar-

¹⁴ On these evolving practices, see E. WELCH, *Shopping in the Renaissance. Consumer cultures in Italy, 1400-1600*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005.



1. The virtuous commercial Sammelbände cycle.

ies because of their subject matter that was of little academic or religious interest. Volumes changed hands more than other more scholarly volumes. Their late entry into heritage collections left them vulnerable to the whim of private owners. A perfect example of this phenomenon is the earliest known edition of the *Grandes et inestimables Cronicques du grant et enorme geant Gargantua*. Printed in Lyon in 1532, the only known copy had begun its life as part of larger codices that contained many other texts before being dismembered¹⁵. Some of the Shakespeare quartos suffered a similar fate¹⁶. The same holds true for other collectible books such as editions of joyous texts. Though they were

¹⁵ R. MENINI, *Le plus ancien exemplaire des Chroniques de Gargantua: note d'archéo-bibliographie*, «L'AnnéeABELAISienne», 8 (2024), forthcoming.

¹⁶ A. FREEMAN - J. I. FREEMAN, *Did Halliwell steal and mutilate the first Quarto of Hamlet?*, «The Library», s. 7, 2 (2001), pp. 349-363.

generally printed on a small number of sheets, mostly in-octavo, they are today to be found in slim single item volumes¹⁷. After a long period during which they had fallen out of fashion, renewed curiosity for their contents resulted in the destruction of their original bindings so that they could be showcased in expensive new ones. Imprints of rare historical editions suffered a similar fate with the rise of local history, as did small Gothic brochures.

Even when owners were careful, each time a Sammelband's possessor died, the volume was in danger. Antiquarian booksellers saw such books as a commercial opportunity. By removing the constituent parts and rebinding them alone, they enhanced their potential profit. As had been the case when they were originally published, by offering each text separately, the seller proposed an object that was more likely to find a buyer. The lone edition was less expensive than acquiring the whole Sammelband and more likely to appeal to the collector. Readers enjoyed personalising their volumes by choosing which titles they combined rather than being offered a pre-existing anthology that would not suit their needs or interests. The second-hand Sammelband was thus less attractive. For the bookseller, the sum of the different parts rebound was far greater than he could hope to obtain for the original single volume.

Once the modifications have been made they are difficult to trace, though when very rare editions are involved it is sometimes possible to reconstitute what occurred. The editions of the topical poetry of the Burgundian author Nicaise Ladam are example of this phenomenon. In the Nineteenth century, virtually all the known copies were preserved in Sammelbände and can be traced back to the sale of the library of a Mechelen chemist in 1840. Bought by the Parisian antiquarian bookseller Techener, the volumes were broken up and rebound in elegant new bindings. The complexity of establishing such provenances is illustrated by the way Techener added false monograms that made the books look as if they emanated from the collections of well-known bibliophiles such as Adolphe-Jean Audenet¹⁸.

If the characteristics and extent of the impact of collectors, bibliophiles and antiquarian booksellers on Sammelbände is still fully to be understood¹⁹, the

¹⁷ On these works, see K. LAVÉANT, *Comment séduire son public? Stratégies commerciales des éditeurs et lectorats des livres joyeux au XVI^e siècle*, in *Les publics de la facétie (XV^e-XVII^e siècles)*. Actes de la journée d'études organisée par le projet Facéties (Labex OBVIL) le 1^{er} juillet 2017, Paris, Sorbonne Université, LABEX OBVIL, 2020, Online publication.

¹⁸ See K. LAVÉANT - M. WALSBY, *Celebrating, interpreting, and spreading news: Nicaise Ladam and publishing topical poetry in the Southern Low Countries (1508-1522)*, «Quærendo», 48 (2018), pp. 17-38: 35-36.

¹⁹ This theme has recently been explored as part of the *Miscellanea e collezionismo librario antiquario* conference of the *Sammelband 15-16* project held in Trieste on 12-14 October 2023.

role of libraries in the destruction of these volumes is even harder to evaluate. The desire to organise epistemically their collections led some institutions to break up *Sammelbände*. In order to classify their contents in a manner that reflected the rational organisation of the library's holdings, it was necessary to separate manuscript items from printed editions, incunabula from Sixteenth-century editions, but also to bring together all the works on given domains. Thus, for instance, the creation of the series on the history of France in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris led to the wholesale break up of thousands of volumes in order to rearrange their contents. This allowed the library to classify editions by theme and chronology with each edict or pamphlet ordered with its own discrete pressmark²⁰. Ripped out of pre-existing volumes, when they were bound with other works that did not suit this classification, each one received its own cardboard binding²¹. The appearance and content of the original volumes were not documented. Even the celebrated bibliographer Henry Bradshaw disregarded *Sammelbände*, breaking up volumes in Cambridge University Library so that he could shelve them by theme, whilst the bibliophilic Grolier Club did so in order to be able to sell off individual items²².

Such practices, both private and institutional, have profoundly affected both our appreciation of the nature of *Sammelbände* and our understanding of their ubiquity in early modern libraries. Well-preserved collections of Sixteenth-century book owners, whose volumes are still today in their original bindings, allow us to reconstruct typical libraries and evaluate the role played by multi-edition volumes. The library of Hubert van Buchell, a canon of Utrecht who died at the very end of the Sixteenth century, is one such case. His books were bequeathed to Utrecht and became one of the founding collections of what was going to become the University library in 1603-1604. By and large

²⁰ See the *Catalogue de l'histoire de France. Bibliothèque impériale, Département des imprimés* (which later became the *Bibliothèque nationale, Département des imprimés*), published initially in Paris by Firmin Didot frères and later by the Bibliothèque nationale itself between 1855 and 1895.

²¹ In his *Rapport présenté à Son Excellence le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Cultes au nom de la Commission chargée d'examiner les modifications à introduire dans l'organisation de la Bibliothèque impériale* (27 mars 1858), Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1858, Prosper Mérimée alluded to the need to expand the «atelier de cartonnage pour les pièces détachées» (p. 16).

²² F. de MAREZ OYENS, *Istc and Provenance*, in *Bibliography and the study of 15th-century civilisation*, edited by L. HELLINGA - J. GOLDFINCH, London, British Library, 1987, pp. 216-227: 220-221. Fredson Bowers also fustigated the practice of abstracting individual works from volumes, see his *Bibliography and modern librarianship* [1966], reprinted in ID., *Essays in bibliography, text, and editing*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1975, pp. 75-93: 80.

preserved in their original bindings, the 2,500 or so editions which bear his name show just how common the creation of *Sammelbände* was: over 85% of the editions are bound with other items²³. As such statistics suggest, such volumes were characteristic of book collections throughout Europe. The lack of studies devoted to this phenomenon is all the more problematic and hampers our overall understanding book ownership and readership in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries. It also requires us to define the concept precisely.

Defining the printed *Sammelband*

What makes *Sammelbände* distinctive from the normative experience of the book today is that they are formed by the integration of different works created separately into a single volume. This process must be distinguished from the practice of bringing texts together as coherent anthologies. Manuscript texts were frequently copied out one after another and miscellanies conceived and produced as a single project were created throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern era. Publishers followed the example of the manuscript world and published editions that presented different texts often created by different authors as part of the same commercial product. These do not constitute a *Sammelband*. In such cases, texts follow each other as part of the same leaf or quire, which is a clue to the manner in which they were conceived. They were meant to be used as a unit and were generally offered for sale as a single whole.

Sammelbände are, in contrast, formed by a series of separate items united in a volume that could have conceivably contained a copy of any edition that was physically compatible – typically produced in the same format. It is made of at least two items, each produced as potentially independent object – though not necessarily to be bound. Their juxtaposition within the same binding is what creates the *Sammelband*. It is, therefore, first and foremost a material reality related to the sewing together of quires that were initially conceived as distinct commercial units. The characteristics of the binding, the content of the texts, the identity of those responsible for the publications and the moment at which they were produced are irrelevant to this definition – though they could, and often did, influence those who decided to unite the different editions.

²³ On this case see also the forthcoming volume: K. LAVÉANT - M. WALSBY, *La collection Van Buchell. Organiser le savoir ou les origines de la Bibliothèque universitaire d'Utrecht*, Strasbourg, Presses universitaires de Strasbourg.

The preference for the German term “Sammelband” (plural: Sammelbände) rather than the English “miscellany”, the Italian “miscellanea” or the French “recueil” derives from the ambiguity of the terms with regard to the definition we have just proposed. A “recueil”, literally “brought together”, does not differentiate between texts assembled and printed out as part of the same edition and those bound in one volume. “Miscellany” or “miscellanea” emphasises difference in the nature of the text and that they are randomly conjoined, a connotation also to be found in the French phrase “recueil factice”. In other words, it passes judgment on content and on how and why the volume was created which is problematic because, as is rapidly clear when they are studied, these volumes very often have an inner coherence – whatever the nature of that coherence. The Dutch word “convoluut” is an interesting neologism taken from the Latin “con-volvere”, to roll together²⁴. However, the word refers more directly to the *volumen* or *rotulus* formats and is less evocative than the German word Sammelband, which simply means “bound together”. Sammelband seems to be the most descriptive and most neutral term, which also has the advantage of having been used by English literary scholars²⁵. As the book historian Paul Needham noted, despite its «rather outlandish sound», it describes the phenomenon better than alternative words²⁶.

The concept of the Sammelband, that of putting together different items in the same binding, does not differentiate between printed and manuscript texts or images. Such a volume can be made up of one or the other or a mix of both of them. The critical factor is whether or not the items were created separately and whether or not they are bound. In order to determine this, especially with regard to manuscript texts or printed images, close examination of the structure of the volume, and specifically of the sheets and quires, is necessary. Manuscripts must be independent from the rest of the volume to be regarded as

²⁴ See the definition given in G. J. VAN BORK *et al.*, *Algemeen letterkundig lexicon*, Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, [2014].

²⁵ For early uses of the term in English, see for instance C. F. BÜHLER, *Comments on a Belgian “Sammelband” of the Early Sixteenth-century in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, «Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America», 58 (1964), pp. 154-156, and F. de MAREZ OYENS, *Istc and Provenance*. For literary usage, see A. GILLESPIE, *Poets, printers, and early English Sammelbände*, «Huntington Library Quarterly», 67 (2004), pp. 189-214; B. TAYLOR, *Print, paratext, and a Seventeenth-century Sammelband: Boccaccio’s Ninfale fiesolano in English translation*, in *Renaissance cultural crossroads. Translation, print and culture in Britain, 1473-1640*, edited by S. K. BARKER - B. M. HOSINGTON, Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 61-78.

²⁶ P. NEEDHAM, *The Printer and the Pardoner. An unrecorded indulgence printed by William Caxton for the Hospital of St Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross*, Washington, Library of Congress, 1986, p. 17.

being a distinct item. In other words, they cannot simply be added blank leaves that were either originally part of a pre-existing item or flyleaves connected to the binding of the volume. The same holds true for printed items that cannot be considered separately if they are structurally conjoined to other items by other means than the sewing. Single-leaf engravings were frequently added to books by individual owners by being pasted onto flyleaves or within an edition, but this does not make the volume a Sammelband. Similarly, one should not use the term to describe books with texts or images added as loose leaves, or anything inserted into the binding structure (within the boards as ersatz cardboard or as reinforcement strips along the spine or elsewhere). The key concept is the sewing together of separate elements.

The moment of binding is the crucial point in the process of Sammelband creation. The volume can be sewn at any point in the life of any of the editions included, whether it be immediately after the items are published or many decades, or even centuries, later. Similarly, there are numerous Sammelbände formed from older volumes that were undone and rebound, sometimes with different editions, sometimes simply to rearrange the order of the items. A copy of any given text could belong at various times to series of different Sammelbände. The traces of such changes are often to be found on items that are today bound separately but which were clearly initially preserved as part of a much larger volume containing different editions. Recreating such lost Sammelbände is a difficult but useful exercise when trying to understand the context of use and preservation of texts – case in point being the reconstruction of two Sammelbände of chivalric editions in the Vatican²⁷.

An expression that has generated much discussion is what has been described as “publishers” Sammelbände or “recueil d’éditeur”, as it seems particularly prevalent in French scholarship²⁸. The concept of this usage is that volumes that seem to be made from different items, were in fact planned as such by the same publisher. In practice, it is sometimes used to describe books made of different editions but thematically coherent (with the same author or type of text) printed for the same publisher. The large number of such cases is in itself fascinating for what it tells us of bookselling and publishing practices. The use of the term “publisher Sammelband” seems, nevertheless, misleading. That publishers very quickly adapted to existing and evolving binding practic-

²⁷ N. HARRIS, *Statistiche e sopravvivenze di antichi romanzi di cavalleria*, in *Il cantare italiano fra folklore e letteratura*, a cura di M. PICONE - L. RUBINI, Firenze, Olschki, 2007, pp. 383-411.

²⁸ See Mathilde Bombart’s introduction to the thematic issue *Recueils factices. De la pratique de collection à la catégorie bibliographique*, «Pratiques et formes littéraires 16-18», 18 (2021): <<https://publications-prairial.fr/pratiques-et-formes-litteraires/index.php?id=403>>.

es in order to offer compatible items, is something we have already noted. Very often they were themselves booksellers and offered bookbinding services to the clients who bought their wares. Therefore, they were well aware that many of their imprints were going to be associated to other works of a similar format and adapted their output accordingly. They could even offer an edition as a companion edition to one that had just been purchased.

However, buyers were not obliged to accept this commercial ploy. The choice of having editions bound together remained on the retail side of the book industry as a result of interactions between booksellers and clients, and was not determined by the publishers. This modularity is borne out by surviving volumes. The four editions of different works by the exiled Catholic theologian, Richard Smith, all published in Louvain by Jean Bogard in 1562, exemplify the diverse ways they could be bound. Produced in the same in-octavo format with a similar presentation, they are often to be found together, but not in the same order and sometimes in incomplete sets²⁹. Though they were conceived to be sold together and were undoubtedly pushed on the buyers, they are still to be looked at as *Sammelbände* created and bound at the request of the purchaser (or, indeed, at the bidding the author himself in certain circumstances).

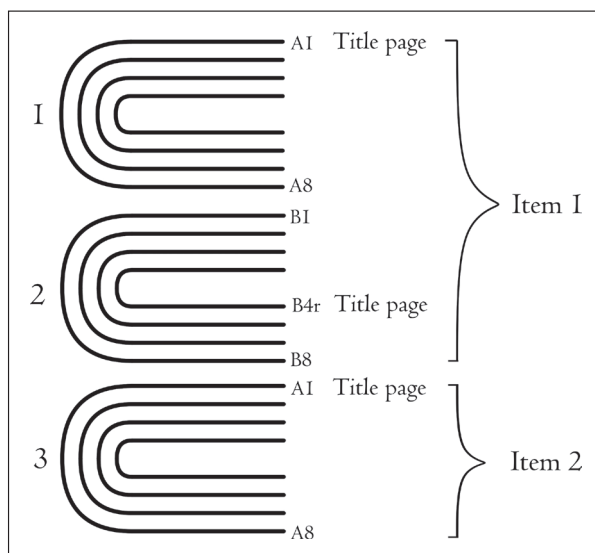
A particular instance that has led to some debate is the practice of some publishers to have editions printed with multiple title pages. As the structural codification of the printed book developed, publishers began to imitate the creation of *Sammelbände* by producing large editions composed by different texts³⁰. These were conceived as a single publishing project, but in the same way as title pages had appeared because they were useful when seeking to distinguish separate items in early printed *Sammelbände* and offered clear markers, so publishers sought to adopt additional internal title pages with large editions to help the reader locate the start of various parts of the book. The presence of extra titles has been seen as proof that these parts also existed as distinct commercial units that were also offered for sale separately. But such this simple conjecture does not withstand detailed scrutiny.

The most obvious problem is the position of the title pages within the structure of the editions. In most cases, they are not systematically placed on

²⁹ See table 1 in M. WALSBY, *Le recueil: comment appréhender un objet méconnu? L'analyse de la collection du Centre Culturel Irlandais à Paris*, «Pratiques et formes littéraires 16-18», 18 (2021), <<https://publications-prairial.fr/pratiques-et-formes-litteraires/index.php?id=275>>.

³⁰ For French literary works, see Anne Réach-Ngô's research and, in particular, *Créations d'atelier. L'éditeur et la fabrique de l'œuvre à la Renaissance*, édité par A. RÉACH-NGÔ, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2014.

the first page of a quire. They could not exist as independent items as they could not be physically removed from the original edition. In the hypothetical edition presented in figure 2, the first two quires have two different title pages, but one is located on B4r and therefore cannot be conceived as a separate item. The third quire's title page is located on the second A1r and has all the structural hallmarks of a distinct edition.



2. A simple two item Sammelband.

In fact, in some cases, the title page was printed on the verso of a leaf. In a publication printed for one of the most active Parisian booksellers, Vincent Sertenas, in 1561, the edition was divided into a number of different parts but with two that began on a verso in the middle of a quire³¹. As shown in figure 3, the title page was not simply composed of information related to the text, but also contained Sertenas's publisher's device, his full address, the date and the indication of his privilege.

In other words, it was a full-blown title page that sought create the same impression upon the reader as the initial title page and define the starting point of a new text within a single edition. On the other hand, it is obvious that this could not be detached and used as the starting point of a stand-alone sub-section. It served a different purpose.

Another issue was that additional title pages, even when they were situated on the first page of a quire, regularly had indications that contradicted the idea that they were meant to be sold separately. In some instances, we find continuous pagination and/or signatures – often indicated on the internal title page itself. When there are no such obvious reasons for discrediting the idea that the

³¹ *Prognostication naturelle, par laquelle un chascun pourra sçavoir dés sa nativité, ce que par le cours du soleil ou degré de son heure natalitie luy doit advenir*, Paris, Vincent Sertenas, 1561 (USTC 77960).



3. Title page of the "Petit traicte de physionomie" in the *Prognostication naturelle* (Chaumont, Bibliothèque municipale Les Silos, 8 B 1 A (2)).

various sections were not meant to be marketed alone, the process – if there is proof, such as parts surviving independently – was not akin to that of the constitution of *Sammelbände*. The creation of a *Sammelband* is centred on the concept of assembling diverse elements within a single volume, as is illustrated by the French term "recueil", from the verb meaning to gather together. The practice of removing parts of an edition to sell separately is diametrically opposed: it involves disassembling.

Breaking up editions seems to have been common practice for certain types of texts and in particular for those that were to be studied. In such cases, gatherings that were to be discussed in class could be sold without the rest of the edition, saving the cost of buying an entire text to some of the poorer students.

Indeed, such practices were so institutionalised that Chrestien Wechel's 1543 bookseller's catalogue contained a specific indication that editions could be purchased as a whole or in parts³². Surviving books bear out this commercial practice. One Sammelband of Parisian editions preserved in the Bibliothèque municipale at Le Mans is composed of at least three such partial copies within the same volume³³. A separate title page was not required for this type of sectioning. In summary, volumes containing texts with title pages by the same publisher and bearing the same date are either anthological editions created as a whole, and are not Sammelbände, or they are diverse editions brought together at the point of retail or at a later date by their owner, in which case they are Sammelbände.

Publishers did adapt to the opportunities offered by the Sammelband in one further significant way. They sought to encourage and channel the practices of clients by offering extra imprints that gave a semblance of extra coherence to very popular gatherings of editions. Certain types of texts were commonly regrouped by buyers and this allowed publishers to further profit from the modularity of the form. They offered a separate title quire that both enticed readers to buy sets of texts – including extra titles they perhaps did not fully need – and were in themselves a source of extra profit. The result was a hybrid form with an overarching title quire that could be wilfully generic or erroneously specific³⁴. An interesting example of the first instance is provided by the volumes of *Mazarinades* published in the middle of the Seventeenth century. Printed, sold and circulating as many separate items, many owners decided to preserve their copies by creating a Sammelband that became a memento of the Fronde. Despite the difference in actual content, many of the surviving volumes have a generic title page of a similar nature that specifies that they are Fronde pamphlets³⁵.

³² *Librorum omnium, quos suis typis excudit Christianus Wechelus, index*, Paris, Chrestien Wechel, 1543, analysed in E. C. PERIC, *Cataloghi editoriali ed edizioni perdute nell'opera bibliografica di Conrad Gessner*, Ph.D. thesis, Napoli, Scuola Superiore Meridionale, 2023, p. 305.

³³ See Le Mans, Médiathèque Louis Aragon, BL 4* 10642, digitised by the *Bibliothèques Virtuelles Humanistes*, <<https://www.bvh.univ-tours.fr>>.

³⁴ These are generally referred to in English as “nonce collections”, see F. BOWERS, *Principles of bibliographical description*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949, pp. 90-92.

³⁵ The scholarly literature on the Mazarinades is extensive. On this aspect, see, most recently, M. BOMBART, *La Fronde en recueils*, and L. BORDES, *Recueils factices de mazarinades. Un singulier exemple du fonds aixois de la Bibliothèque Méjanes*, both published in «Pratiques et formes littéraires», 18 (2021), <<https://publications-prairial.fr/pratiques-et-formes-litteraires/index.php?id=249>>.

The second category is represented by volumes with a title page that announces a series of parts that have their own title page. Unlike the case of an edition that could be disassembled, this involved adding a title page gathering to series of previously produced pamphlets for a readership that they thought might be interested in acquiring the complete set. A case in point is offered by the publications of Parisian publishers in the middle of the Sixteenth century such as Thomas Richard and Thomas Brumen. They produced quarto books of classical authors and their commentaries, typically used by students and often richly annotated. Their *Aristotelis Logica, ab eruditissimis hominibus conversa*, announced on the title page a list of works³⁶. Surviving copies show that the actual content varied with different editions (sometimes printed over a decade earlier), bound in various orders, works regularly missing and others added depending on the *Sammelband*. Such volumes were clearly put together at the behest of the buyers who modulated the content based on their need, whatever the overarching title page recommended they include. The pieces were conceived and produced separately, sometimes many years earlier. These suggested *Sammelbände* lists were in fact retail tools that could shift old stock and encourage purchases.

Understanding *Sammelbände*

As these examples have shown, *Sammelbände* are complex artefacts that have been in great part absent from the story of the printed book. And yet, they are vitally important and their study promises to further our understanding of printed books significantly. They were objects made for and at the request of users, but they influenced the very form of the printed edition and how it was conceived by publishers. They also tell us about reader practices and the evolving interactions between texts, images, and books.

The increasing number of studies of different types of *Sammelbände* emphasise how rich the field has become and hint at some of the lessons we shall be able to take from such research. If the original idea behind the inception of multi-item volumes would seem to have its roots in economic considerations or issues around the long-term preservation of texts, it is now clear that it would be simplistic to conclude that all *Sammelbände* were created for these reasons. It is obvious, for instance, that the desire to regroup similar items, to organise

³⁶ Variant versions of this were published by Thomas Richard and Thomas Brumen in 1558 (USTC 198334), 1559, in 1560 (USTC 152953 and 138978) and 1561 (USTC 139103) for instance. Other publishers produced similar compendia.

texts and the access to the knowledge they contained, was often the prime motive. At this stage, it would be presumptuous to attempt to offer a comprehensive overview of all the characteristics and various forms and aims of such a multifaceted object. Much more research is need – research that associates the analysis of the materiality of the book to an understanding of the text and images of the editions it contains.

Perdite e sopravvivenze
del libro antico:
il ruolo delle miscellanee

a cura di
AMANDINE BONESSO

 **FORUM**

Udine 2024