The Paper Trade in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Materials, Networks

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This two-day conference is thought to be the first conference specifically related to the early modern paper trade, with papers devoted to the trade in Italy, Germany, Spain, Iceland, Denmark, the Low Countries, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, Switzerland, Hungary, and Hausaland (modern day northern Nigeria). The papers were divided into three themes: „Hotspots and Trade Routes", „Usual Dealings", and „Recycling Economies". DANIEL BELLINGRADT (Erlangen) opened the conference by pointing to the curiously paperless history of the paper trade. Despite the fact that the number of paper mills and their production levels expanded dramatically in connection with the rise of printing houses and government bureaucracies, the paper trade is one of the least studied areas in early modern history. The conference was intended to fill this gap by focusing on paper's „middlemen" (marketers, warehousers, transporters, traders, and merchants), the practices of the trade, the transregional routes and distribution networks, the business tactics, and the materiality of movement; in short, a „sociomateriality of paper" that encompasses the full life cycle of paper from rags to recycled paper. These previously invisible agents and practices underpinned the intellectual, administrative, religious, and economic activities of early modern Europe, providing the substrate for nearly all written communication.

Under the theme „Hotspots and Trade Routes", ANNA GIALDINI (Roehampton) highlighted the fact that Venetian printers sourced paper from a wide range of sources – directly from mills, but also from professional guilds and retailers – and were vulnerable to shortages during plague outbreaks and political turmoil; in times of surplus, paper was exported to Germany and the Ottoman empire. In sixteenth century Frankfurt, the Frankfurt Fair was a major site for paper trading, as well as a hub for printing and government administration. One of the key paper producers and traders in Frankfurt was Anstett Leutholt (presented by MEGAN WILLIAMS (Groningen)), who developed innovative strategies for collecting rags, sold paper domestically and internationally and whose distinctive spread eagle watermark with an „F" was imitated by other paper mills. RENAUD ADAM (Liège) argued that paper is a market product, typically traded several times before reaching the end user. Using bibliographic and archival methods, he compared the paper found in two books printed by the Flemish printer Dirk Martens in Aalst in the late fifteenth century, tracing the paper from mill to merchant to printer. In both cases, the paper came from multiple mills in eastern France, but was of similar quality since it was all produced from similar water sources, rag quality, and craftsmanship. Adam traced possible routes from eastern France to Aalst, pointing out the connections between paper routes and concentrations of printing houses. Were paper mills established first, followed by printing houses, or the other way around? In sixteenth-century Castile, Juan Tomas Fabario blurred the lines between papermaker and publisher. BENITO RIAL COSTAS (Madrid) described how the book merchant, papermaker, and paper trader Fabario bankrolled various publications between 1496 and 1544, providing bridge loans to printers, whose investment in paper was not recouped until books were sold. JAN WILLEM VELUWENKAMP (Groningen) analysed the Sound Toll Registers Online[1] to look at the flow of paper reams through the Danish Sound from 1600 to 1850. The Danish Sound connected the North and Baltic Seas – paper flowed east from Amsterdam, Bordeaux, and elsewhere to Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Lübeck, and beyond. ORIETTA DE LA ROLD (Cambridge) looked at London port books to track the import of paper from Italy in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. From 1395 to 1411, 1.300 reams of Venice paper were

[1] See http://www.soundtoll.nl (20.04.2019).

sent to Bruges and London, but the majority of imported paper was for wrapping and other non-textual purposes. Paper in the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century came from three main sources, according to REBECCA BAYRAM (Birmingham): domestic product, Eastern paper arriving with the caravans, and European paper. In the fifteenth century, European paper was considered contaminated because its Christian makers consumed wine and pork (prohibited by Islamic law) and because Christian symbols in watermarks, such as a cross, angels, or lambs, could be seen as endorsing idolatry. The legal jurist Ibn Marzuq issued a fatwa arguing that Christian paper could be transformed into Islamic paper by the simple action of writing a holy text onto the paper (Qur'an 21.18: „We shall hurl truth at falsehood…"). With this ruling, Ottomans could continue to collect customs taxes and expand their empire, with European paper gradually overtaking locally made paper because of its cheapness and higher quality. Italian papermakers created the *tre lune* (three crescent moons) watermark specifically for the Ottoman market. By the eighteenth century, this watermark was copied by many papermakers across Europe. The final paper in this section by MICHAELLE BIDDLE (Ann Arbor) explored the trans-Saharan paper trade to Hausaland and Borno, circa 1550-1911. Italian paper is found as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and the *tre lune* watermark as early as 1652. Paper was an extremely expensive commodity, due to the daunting number of intermediaries involved in the paper trade, and arrived on twice yearly caravans between Tripoli and Borno in the seventeenth century. Biddle has found that a single manuscript could contain paper from multiple stocks, produced over two centuries.

Under the theme „Usual Dealings", NINA LAMAL (Antwerp) discussed the political advantages of having access to a steady and reliable supply of paper in the early modern news business. Manuscript and printed newsletters, some of which were distributed multiple times a week, required large quantities of paper, leading at least one printer to also own a paper mill. The production of newsletters was not limited to urban centers: Lamal cited the example of two different seventeenth century newspapers in the provincial town of Foligno, which not only had a paper mill but was also on the postal route and so on the path of incoming news reports. SIMON BURROWS (Sydney) searched the metadata of the French Book Trade and Enlightenment Database to explore the supply networks and paper consumption of the late eighteenth century Swiss publisher, the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, which simultaneously ran twelve printing presses and whose archive survived to the present day. This methodology reveals patterns of consumption not otherwise visible, including a decline after 1782 due to their heavy dependence on the French market: new laws in the Parisian book trade and a French financial crisis that led long-term business associates to withdraw their investments. An analysis of the publisher's correspondence reveals that much of the paper was coming from the nearby Franco-Swiss border, but also from further afield – particularly Lyon, which had a strong textile industry and paper-trading business. KRISTZINA RABAI (Szeged) analyzed the court accounts of the third generation of the Jagiellonian dynasty from 1490 to 1507 for her discussion of their use and acquisition of paper. She found over one hundred entries for paper, sometimes with quantity, price, and reason for purchase. These findings upend the common perception that Jagiellonian rulers were weak and poor, indicating the high value they placed on correspondence and record-keeping. FRANK BIRKENHOLZ (Groningen) explored the sourcing of paper for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the early eighteenth century, beginning his talk with an account of a complaint by the Amsterdam Chamber (the largest VOC department) that they could not read the reports written on low-quality European paper coming from Batavia. The account books from 1710–1720 for the Amsterdam Chamber provide many references to paper dealers, types, qualities, formats, volumes, and prices, leading Birkenholz to argue that the VOC was a „paper empire," and that understanding paper purchases is essential for understanding VOC's administrative practices. The VOC sent paper acquired in Amsterdam

but produced by mills in Germany, Switzerland, France, and Holland, to Japan, China, the Dutch East Indies (Batavia), Ceylon, India, Arabia, and Safavid Persia. The company operated a paper mill in Batavia from 1664 to 1681, but the quality was not high enough to make it sustainable; likewise, Chinese paper was too thin and fragile. SILVIA VERONIKA HUFNAGEL (Vienna / Reykjavik) also relied on account books for her presentation on the paper supplies of a sixteenth-century Icelandic bishop, part of a three-year joint project called „Paper Trails". Iceland had a strong manuscript culture, with no paper mills and a single printing press until 1770. The bishop published one hundred books, including the first Bible translation into Icelandic, sourcing paper of various qualities paper from Germany and elsewhere, relying on various middlemen, official and private networks, and a variety of ships, ports, and routes (it could be a three week trip, dangerous and difficult, from Hamburg, Lübeck, and Copenhagen). Transport routes within Iceland were seasonal and slow – everything done on horseback with pack saddles.

The final theme of the conference was „Recycling Economies". ANDREAS WEBER (Twente) presented on experimental papermaking and reuse as part of a bigger project on chemistry and everyday life in the Netherlands, circa 1800. The most highly valued writing papers came from the Zaan area – Zaan paper was smoother than paper from Veluwe, which had the same whiteness but rougher texture, while paper from Egmond was more yellow and flat. Papermakers could rely on well-established domestic preferences, but also a global trade with bespoke paper for different markets. A culture of secrecy surrounded papermaking practices, with papermakers in a unique position to react to changing fashions and experiment with new raw materials. ANNA REYNOLDS (York) situated her talk as part of the long history of the re-use of textual substrates, from recycled papyrus used to wrap Egyptian mummies to parchment and wastepaper reused as binding material. She focused on extant printers' waste that is now visible in early modern bindings. The English Stationers' Company orchestrated a lively and profitable trade in wastepaper (or „waste text", since the paper was still highly valuable). By 1602, they offered printers 21 pence a ream for waste paper, which they could then resell to be used as wrapping paper, damask paper, and other non-textual functions. Finally, SANDRA ZAWREL (Erlangen) spoke on the lively trade in scrap paper in eighteenth century Amsterdam, using as her source the account book of the paper trader Zacharias Segelke from 1788 to 1804. Segelke purchased scraps from *boekverkoopers* (booksellers / printers / publishers), paper traders, and paper brokers, in weights ranging from twenty to one thousand pounds. He then sold scrap paper to other paper traders, *boekverkoopers*, and packaging paper makers. His primary trade was in new stationery, books, and packing paper, but the 5% of his income that derived from buying and selling waste-paper reveals the nuances of his longstanding trade relationships and the moral logic of the recycling economy. Zawrel also discussed the various categories and costs of waste-paper, which was broadly broken down into *misdruk* (misprints and poor-quality paper traded by the ream and quire) and *snippers* (scraps traded by the pound). The trade in scraps was not transregional, but specific to commercial centers all over Europe.

We departed the conference buzzing with ideas and connections, excited for the conference proceedings to be published as a book, edited by Daniel Bellingradt and Anna Reynolds, and published by Brill as part of the series *Library of the Written Word*, that further lays the groundwork for a historiography of the paper trade.

Conference overview:

Daniel Bellingradt (Erlangen): The Paper Trade in Early Modern Europe

Anna Gialdini (London): Selling Paper in Early Modern Venice: Booksellers, Bookbinders, and the *Librari da carta bianca*

Megan Williams (Groningen): Early Papermakers and Paper Traders in Sixteenth-Century Frankfurt

Renaud Adam (Liège): The Paper Supply of a Printing House as a Mirror of the Paper Trade in the Early Modern Low Countries: The Case

of Dirk Martens' Workshop

Benito Rial Costas (Madrid): Juan Tomás Fabario and the Paper Trade in Sixteenth-Century Castile

Jan Willem Veluwenkamp (Groningen): Ream Trail: The Paper Flows Through the Danish Sound, 1600-1850

Orietta da Rold (Cambridge): Networks of Paper in Late Medieval England

Rebecca Bayram (Birmingham): Water and Wire: The Flow of Paper between the Ottoman Empire and Europe around 1800

Michaelle M. Biddle (Ann Arbor): How to Load a Camel: The Trans-Saharan Trade in Paper to Hausaland and Borno and its Connections to Europe, c. 1550-1911

Nina Lamal (Antwerp): Paper Within the Early Modern News Business

Simon Burrows (Sydney): Stationers, Papetiers and the Supply Networks of an Eighteenth-Century Swiss Publisher

Krisztina Rabái (Szeged): The Usage and Acquisition of Paper in the Jagiellonian Courts, 1490-1507

Frank Birkenholz (Groningen): The Paper Purchases of the Dutch East India Company's Amsterdam Chamber in the Eighteenth Century

Silvia Vernoka Hufnagel (Vienna / Reykjavik): Paper Trails of *Guðbrandur Þorkláksson*: the Paths of Purchasing Paper for the Sixteenth-Century Bishop of Hólar, Iceland

Andreas Weber (Twente): Material Sensibilities: Paper, Chemistry, and Recylcing in the Late Eighteenth Century

Anna Reynolds (York): Waste Paper in Early Modern England

Sandra Zawrel (Erfurt): Finding Value in Waste: The Trade of Scrap-Paper in Eighteenth Century Amsterdam

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