The Utrecht Workshop—13/14 June 2022

The Sammelband 15-16 network held a workshop at Utrecht University Library. Organised by Bart Jaski, Katell Lavéant and Malcolm Walsby, this meeting had a different set-up than previous meetings. Instead of giving papers on their own case studies, researchers and librarians coming from Cyprus, England, France, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, were invited to study a selection of Sammelbände during thematic sessions.

Thanks to the access given by the library to its very rich collections, they could study a great diversity of cases to better understand material characteristics of early modern Sammelbände.

Curator Bart Jaski had made a large selection of Sammelbände kept at Utrecht University Library, which was founded with private collections that were donated to the city and have therefore been kept for a great part in their original, sixteenth-century state, or carefully restored.

The first day started with a general presentation of the history of the Utrecht University library collections and was followed by sessions on provenances, and on maculatures and bindings.

Working in groups, the participants studied selections of volumes to reconstruct the links between them thanks to provenances of early modern Utrecht collectors such as those of Hubert and Arnoud van Buchell, and Evert van de Poll.

They also analysed fragments of medieval manuscripts from Utrecht churches that were reused to decorate and reinforce the bindings of sixteenth-century volumes of printed books, which offered points of discussion for the analysis of the bindings and their structure. The last session of Monday 13 June was a "Speed-dating with Sammelbände". The participants had ten minutes to pair up and study a Sammelband and then present it to the rest of the group, to underline its material and thematic specificities.

For some participants, it was love at first sight; for others, the date turned out to be more problematic.

This first day was a great way to engage with many cases of Sammelbände, and to exchange knowledge and discuss methods to study the materiality of these objects.

On Tuesday 14 June, Malcolm Walsby presented key criteria to define whether a volume can be considered as a Sammelband, according to the framework and objectives of the research project, with a specific attention given to borderline cases. A final session was devoted to the challenges of digitising Sammelbände.

Katell Lavéant

Digitising Sammelbände

Coen van der Steappen and Janet Slob presented the first results of a vast campaign of digitisation of the Sammelbände from the Hubert van Buchell collection in Utrecht, and their methods to select items and produce usable metadata.

A list of the digitised items is available on the UBU website and is regularly updated.

Ann-Marie Hansez presented the on-going project of cataloguing of the Fagel collection in Trinity College Dublin, and the plans currently made to digitise the vast cluster of Dutch pamphlets comprised in this collection.

The Utrecht University Library digitisation lab

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The Utrecht workshop was organised on the theme ‘How to work with Sammelbände? Understanding the van Buchell collection’. As well as being the first real event of the Sammelband project, it also celebrated the launch of a special collaboration between the project and Utrecht’s University Library, which hosts a unique collection, the Hubert van Buchell collection, containing many Sammelbände.

The study of this collection not only enables us to understand how one individual conceived his volumes, but also adds to our knowledge of cultural life and book circulation in Utrecht and Cologne.

The one-day seminar featured papers on this collection and other examples that explored the methodologies and tools we can use to study these objects. There was also a presentation of a selection of books from the van Buchell collection.

The Utrecht seminar, 11 October 2019

The Sammelband 15-16 project group organised a Winter school at Enssib in Lyon that sought to emphasise the importance of material examination in the analysis of Sammelbände and the problems they pose.

In a series of general papers that sought to adopt a didactic approach for those not familiar with the archaeology of the book, the participants looked in turn at all the constituent elements of the printed book.

In front of a large audience, separate papers delved in depth into the details of bindings, the material used to strengthen the volumes, but also into the analysis of the printed matter, the texts and their content, as well as annotations and other types of user interactions.

The Udine conference, 16-17 September 2021

Entitled ‘The Survival and Destruction of Early Printed Books: the Role of Miscellanies’, the conference organised in Udine sought to examine the history and significance of Sammelbände over the centuries, with a great diversity of cases from all over Europe, spanning from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.

After an initial lecture on general principles for the study of Sammelbände, papers in Italian, French and English explored several facets of these material objects.

A series of presentations was devoted to case-studies that allowed participants to analyse different themes of collection and discoveries of earlier imprints held within eighteenth-century bindings. Other papers developed new avenues of research in the study of provenances to reconstitute (partly) lost private libraries and the production of specific workshops. Specific considerations were also given to the question of the manuscript Sammelbände and of library cataloguing and conservation.

The conference proved to be a stimulating encounter of specialists from diverse horizons.
Organised by the Gabriel Naudé research centre, the event welcomed researchers, librarians and bookbinders who discussed aspects of Sammelbände from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth century. It mainly concentrated on aspects such as the role of bindings and how they can be analysed. It was also the opportunity to listen to a selection of case studies that enabled members of the project to compare different volumes and their characteristics. Papers focused on examples taken from Belgian, Dutch, French and Italian contexts.

The event began on 25 November by a visit of the Museum of Printing and Graphic Communication of the city of Lyon housed in a beautiful Renaissance townhouse. The visit featured a work session devoted to the sixteenth-century collection of the library with both bound items and fragments.

The next day, organised at Ensib, featured a series of papers on the theme of making and using Sammelbände and how they were preserved in public libraries. After these sessions, a special session was devoted to the analysis of everyday sixteenth-century bindings.

The workshop was concluded by a lecture by Neil Harris on a bibliographical mystery surrounding a Pisan edition of the Italian poem La Bellamano by Giusto de’ Conti.

**Publication project: A book of case studies**

Though the Sammelband 15-16 project has inevitably been slowed down by the Covid pandemic, the first five meetings of the Sammelband project have underlined that the study of these objects is essential to our understanding of books in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and their survival over the following centuries.

In order to give the project a starting point, it was decided before the Udine conference to publish a volume dedicated to Sammelbände, principally based on the contributions to the various events organised by the research group.

It is, however, important to understand that this will not be a collection of conference “acts”, but of “case studies” that focus on the Sammelband as a book structure over the course of centuries.

The papers will discuss a broad range of themes and will in particular address the description of individual Sammelbände, both manuscript and print, the collections of Sammelbände in the library of a particular collector; Sammelbände that have been broken up or dispersed, whose original form is reconstructed on the basis of physical evidence or through the witness of bibliographical or catalogue records of the past; the fortune of single works, whose circulation and diffusion depends largely on Sammelbände; fragments of manuscripts or printed books discovered inside a binding; discussions relating to method, for instance, on the cataloguing of Sammelbände or their role in the survival of books.

The volume will be published by the University of Udine publishing house, Forum, in the series “Libri e biblioteche”, and will be edited by Amandine Bonesso.
Sammelband 15-16 is a project that studies the creation and use of Sammelbände in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.

The extraordinary initial development of the printing industry has been carefully charted and analysed. But many aspects of the volumes created as a result of this proliferation of printed texts are yet to be investigated.

The Sammelbände are a case in point. The works produced in the printer’s workshop were not automatically encased in a publishers binding. The choice of a binding, its quality and characteristics, were generally determined by the owner. The result was a great variety in bindings that, even in the simplest of cases, represented a substantial proportion of the cost of book acquisition. This encouraged the fashioning of volumes that contained not just one work, but different texts gathered and bound together, volumes which are generally known by the German term, Sammelband.

These volumes are one of the most striking features of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century book world yet their characteristics have not been the subject of detailed analysis. As a result, despite their ubiquity even today, scholars have little understanding of these volumes. This project seeks to understand the steps that led to their creation and their use in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.

The Sammelband 15-16 are...

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