

2024 CERL Annual Seminar  
*European Printing in Non-Latin Scripts*  
National Central Library of Rome  
23 october 2024  
ABSTRACTS

**SECTION 1: TECHNOLOGY IN CONTEXT**

*The Venice Quran*

Roberto Tottoli

*Rector, University of Naples L'Orientale*

The Qur'an printed by Alessandro Paganini in Venice in 1537-38 was one of the first books printed in Arabic in Europe. The only existing copy was discovered by Angela Nuovo in 1987. Scholars and Arabists have examined this copy, pointing out its mistakes and the subsequent failure of this typographical and editorial endeavor. In my presentation, I will present the initial findings of a new comprehensive reading of this work, which is part of the research conducted on the Arabic printed and manuscript Qur'ans produced in Europe or by Europeans for the ERC-Synergy EuQu (The European Qur'an) project. Additionally, I will propose new hypotheses regarding the origin of certain features of this text and discuss the questions raised by mistakes that can be traced back to the source text and the probable informants.

---

*Collection Orientale: art, scholarship, and imperial prestige in print*

Borna Izadpanah

*Lecturer in Typography, University of Reading, UK*

This paper investigates the establishment of the *Collection Orientale*, a visionary printing endeavour undertaken by the Imprimerie royale in the 1830s, designed to showcase the richness of oriental manuscripts housed in the Bibliothèque du Roi. Originally mandated in 1813 and revived in 1825, the project aimed to print revered Eastern works in their original scripts with French translations, combining artistic and scholarly endeavours to assert France's cultural superiority in Europe. Despite numerous setbacks and delays, the initiative gained momentum in the 1830s under the direction of Pierre-Antoine Lebrun, who assembled a distinguished committee of orientalist and scholars to oversee the project's execution. The *Collection Orientale* was conceived as both a typographical and scholarly triumph, blending rigorous academic investigation with magnificent artistry. This paper traces the intricate processes of commissioning, translation, and typographic execution, highlighting the roles of key figures.

---

***The Medici Oriental Press (Rome, 1584-1614): A Journey Through its Manuscripts, Editions, and Typographical Heritage***

Sara Fani

*Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna*

The *Typographia Medicea Linguarum Externarum* was a pioneering printing project: it was founded in Rome in 1584 under the auspices of Pope Gregory XIII and Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici with the intent of producing printed editions in oriental languages (mainly Arabic and Syriac) to be exported in Eastern lands and for the European orientalists. Its publishing projects met the interests of the financiers of the enterprise and its scientific director, Giovanni Battista Raimondi, who managed to produce several editions of texts concerning language, Christian religion, mathematics, and natural sciences, thanks to manuscripts collected mainly from the Middle East, Persia, and Egypt. This paper will offer an overview of the material related to the typographical activities of the Medici Oriental Press, based on the manuscripts of its collection, its published editions, and the typographical material still available and mostly preserved in Florence. Additionally, thanks to the extensive archival documentation available, it will provide a brief overview of the publishing activity of the *Typographia*, with references to both the published and the planned editions, along with the complex context of working with oriental texts in early modern Rome.

---

***Exoticis linguis: Bodoni's editions in Oriental characters***

Andrea De Pasquale

*Director General of the Education, Research and Cultural Institutes Department, Italian Ministry of Culture*

One of the most peculiar and significant characteristics of Giambattista Bodoni's typographical production and which contributed to the fame of his typography is represented by the works in alphabets defined as "exotic" or non-Latin, created above all through the use of characters especially designed and engraved by Bodoni himself. The paper will illustrate this particular production starting from Bodoni's first experiences at the Propaganda Fide printing house in Rome.

---

***Printing an Armenian Icon: From Venetian Origins to Global Expansion***

Erin Piñon

*Postdoctoral Fellow, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*

In 1749, the first volume of a Classical Armenian dictionary was printed in Venice. Tipped in between a lengthy and impassioned preface and the dictionary's entries for the letter U (A), appears an engraving of a celestial meeting of Armenia's most celebrated late-antique and medieval men of letters—the Holy Translators, as they came to be known. This staged,

anachronistic salon-in-the-skies was a fitting frontispiece for *Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, a comprehensive and exhaustive witness to Classical Armenian. This talk begins at this spread, comprised of image and information, and materially, technologically, and ideologically separates the two. Using the image of the Holy Translators as a case study, I show how the visual elements of *Dictionary of the Armenian Language* defied their lexicographical setting. Instead, and very much like a spoken language, the engraved image was subject to local manipulation, translation, and the very vernacularization the dictionary project sought to abolish, eventually becoming a prolific eighteenth-century printed icon.

---

***'Opening to you the road that leads to knowledge': printing in Irish, 1571-1700***

John McCafferty

*Professor of History, University College Dublin, Ireland*

Printing in Irish in Ireland began late with a Protestant catechism made in Dublin in 1571. This paper will draw attention to two interconnected features of this phenomenon. First, the decision to use an insular scribal hand for the typeface. This continued as the norm until the spelling and printing reforms in the 1960s. It made Gaeilge/Irish publishing different to most western European languages rendering it both 'exotic' and expensive. Second, use of the island's vernacular and majority language became intimately bound up with the confessionalization of the population. Printing in Irish was in the 16th and 17thC used almost entirely for devotional and polemical purposes. These fonts were not used for secular business.

---

***The cut of hieroglyphic punches and the "Egyptological gaze" in the mid-nineteenth century***

Pierre Fournier

*Lecturer in Graphic Design, University of Strasbourg*

In 1845, the Egyptologist J.-A. Letronne published the "Abydos Table printed in movable type", the first specimen to demonstrate the technical intelligence and aesthetic qualities of a new hieroglyphic typeface cut since 1842 at the Imprimerie Royale de France. The plate produced shows how orientalists, designers and punchcutters overcame the difficulties posed by the typographic materialization of a script composed of quadrats structured by a constant quest for harmony. Based on the preparatory drawings for the cut of punches held at the Imprimerie Nationale's Atelier du Livre d'art et de l'Estampe, this presentation takes an archaeological look at the production of these punches in full silhouette. Thanks to this publication tool, we can analyze the way in which the first Egyptologists approached hieroglyphic inscriptions, as well as the way in which these punches reflect the construction of publishing practices. The typographic stylization of hieroglyphs, and the difference between the type and its source, help us to observe this first "Egyptological gaze".

---

## SECTION 2: COLLECTIONS

### ***Printing in Chinese Characters in Italy: an Absence and a Need***

Federica Olivotto

*National Central Library of Rome, "IsIAO Library" – ISMEO The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies*

Following direct contact between China and Europe, starting with the Catholic missions in the 16th century, some attempts were made to print Chinese characters in Europe. In France, for example, the issue was successfully dealt with in the first decades of the 18th century. In contrast, Italian books did not include Chinese characters in Latin script texts until the end of the 19th century. The reasons for this absence were both technical and historical. When Italian publications finally started featuring Chinese characters, it was not for evangelization purposes, but rather the response to the scientific need of secular institutions such as universities.

---

### ***Printing in Greek. Tracing Greek Typography through the collections of the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, the Onassis Library, and the Gennadius Library***

Vera Andriopoulou, Kleopatra Kyrtata, Angeliki Papadopoulou

*Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, Athens*

Vicky Gerontopoulou, Nikolaos Sideris

*Onassis Foundation Library*

Irini Solomonidi

*Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*

Greek was one of the first non-Latin scripts to be printed in 15th-century western Europe. The history of Greek printing is intricately tied to its unique aspects concerning its producers, audience, and technological challenges. It also mirrors the cognitive priorities, spiritual pursuits, educational strategies, and revolutionary endeavors of Greek intellectuals and enlightened merchants. This paper offers a concise overview of the development of printing in Greek, from the 15th to the 19th century, expanding on three major focus points: The book production of classical Greek and Byzantine authors, responding to the interests of humanist circles in Renaissance Europe; the production for a Greek-speaking audience, catering to the needs of the church, education and the spreading of the ideas of the Modern Greek Enlightenment, including vernacular Greek books that denote the emergence of Modern Greek literature; and the role of printing in Greece proper during the Greek War of Independence and its expansion to serve the needs of the newly established state and its people. This exploration will draw from the rare collections of three private Greek institutions, each with a prominent role in the country's cultural life: the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, the Onassis Library and the Gennadius Library (of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens)

---

### ***Early Hebrew Printing***

Thomas Tabery

*Head of the Oriental and Asian Department, Bavarian State Library, Munich*

From the very beginning, the invention of printing was enthusiastically welcomed in Judaism. It is therefore not surprising that the first dated Hebrew book was published by Abraham ben Garton in Reggio di Calabria already in February 1475. However, it can be assumed that a number of undated works in Hebrew square script must have been produced in Rome even earlier between 1469 and 1472. The paper gives an overview of early centers of Hebrew book production in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries and presents a number of examples of early prints from the Bavarian State Library's holdings and from other collections. The historical context as well as the cultural and religious implications of Hebrew printing are also taken into account.

---

### ***Glagolitica: historical collection of the National and University Library in Zagreb***

Irena Galić Bešker

*Head of the Manuscripts and Rare Books, National Library of Croatia, Zagreb*

*Glagolitica*, the collection of Glagolitic writings of the National and University Library in Zagreb contains 35 hand-printed books and 61 manuscripts. The number of Glagolitic books increases distinctively if we add the many monographic resources in the form of machine printed books, mostly published as luxury facsimiles of original works together with the transcription. Glagolitic editions were published sporadically and in waves in the long period from the 15th until 20th century. The collection of the National and University Library in Zagreb was formed 1875, when the modern university was founded. Over time, the Glagolitic collection has been growing, enriched by valuable items that were acquired as gifts or have been extracted from a distinctive legacy. In the past Glagolitic script coexisted together with Cyrillic and Latin scripts on Croatian ground, although Latin script was chosen to be the Croatian national script very early. Rich in its variety, Glagolitic books collection comprises liturgical books, abecedaries, catechisms, theological books, prayer books and fiction. Geographically scattered over Europe, Glagolitic printing houses flourished in Italy (Venice, Rome), Croatia (town of Senj, city of Rijeka, island of Krk) and Germany (Urach near Tübingen). Some of them printed Glagolitic books only, others printed books in Glagolitic as well as in Latin, Cyrillic, and oriental scripts. The relation between language, script, and typography will be explored.

---

***The transition from ideograms to romanized script: a decisive phase in Vietnam's publishing history***

Giang Huong NGUYEN

*Head of the Southeast Asia collections, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris*

Vietnamese belongs to the Môn-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic languages. Then, this language has borrowed from Chinese and French over the centuries. Its script successively switched to different transcription systems: the traditional Chinese script, the Vietnamese script made up of ideograms borrowed from Chinese – the *nôm* - and the romanized script – the *quốc ngữ*. The key cultural event in Vietnam's contemporary history was the transition from traditional publishing - xylographic or handwritten and relatively rare - to modern printing inspired by Western techniques. This transformation, which was also taking place in other Asian countries, was accompanied in Vietnam by another upheaval. Between 1900 and 1920, the romanized script, *quốc ngữ*, was popularized, replacing definitively ideograms. The development of modern printing, which both disseminated and symbolized new ideas, accompanied a profound transformation in mentalities.

Our talk will focus on the transition from ideograms to romanized script, from xylography to Western printing, through the rich Vietnamese collections held at the National Library of France.

---

***Early Modern Globalization and Describing the Global Library: Multiscript Collecting and Cataloging***

Abigail Connick and Devin Fitzgerald

*Special Collections, Library of the University of California, Los Angeles*

Long known for its historical strengths in sixteenth century Italian printing, UCLA Library Special Collections holds a large number of books printed in Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian, and Syriac. Until recently, these texts rarely figured into curatorial or cataloging concerns. Beginning in 2019, when we began assessing our Islamicate manuscript backlogs, Library Special Collections began to pivot towards approaches to collection development that emphasized intercultural contact between Europe and other world regions. What we encountered was that cultures were deeply connected, sharing information through various media networks, including printed books and manuscripts. Cataloging these books, however, has proven to be challenging not only due to the non-Latin scripts present, but also because current rare book cataloging standards are primarily equipped to handle texts in Latin scripts from Europe and North America. In this talk, we will describe how we have developed new curatorial and cataloging approaches to recenter our commitment to a capacious vision for special collections.

---

## SECTION 3: CATALOGUING

### *Cataloguing Printed Books in Non-Latin Scripts at the British Library*

Michael Erdman

*Head, Middle Eastern and Central Asian Collections, The British Library, London*

Emma Harrison

*Curator of Chinese Collections, The British Library, London*

Given the linguistic diversity of its collections, the British Library is no stranger to handling data in non-Latin scripts. From handwritten cards and handlists, to published catalogues and digital solutions, these data have taken a variety of forms over the collections' long history. These complexities have led to a range of different cataloguing projects and workstreams that make significant tranches of the collection discoverable to researchers and readers around the world.

Through selected case studies, this presentation will explore a combination of manual and semi-automated approaches used in the creation and migration of metadata, both by British Library staff alone and in partnership with other institutions. It will review the basic principles and international standards adopted by the Library, the systems that we currently use, and their relationship to other institutions globally. These cataloguing practices reflect the British Library's commitment to making the collections more accessible, as well as working collaboratively with scholarly and non-scholarly communities.

---

### *Non Latinum est, non catalogatur: making non-Latin scripts retrievable in SBN and EDIT16*

Flavia Bruni

*University of Chieti-Pescara*

Maria Cristina Mataloni and Elena Ravelli

*Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and Bibliographic Information - ICCU, Rome*

Born in 1951, the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian libraries and for bibliographic information (ICCU) is the Italian national bibliographic agency. In addition to the collective catalogue SBN, currently comprising over 20 millions of resources ranging from manuscript and printed books to digital materials found in more than 7.000 libraries, the ICCU also manages a few special databases and OPACs, including EDIT16, the online bibliography of sixteenth-century Italian printed books. In the constant effort to renew and update the services to its users, the ICCU is currently working on a feasibility plan to add multilingual records about books printed in non-Latin scripts to its databases and OPACs. This paper will provide an overview on the challenges brought about by the development of these features in the context of both SBN and EDIT16, and provide a perspective on achievable goals and reasonable hopes for the next few years.

---

***Cataloguing the Chinese printed book collection of BNCR: an ongoing special project***

Valentina Longo

*National Central Library of Rome*

Davor Antonucci

*Associate Professor, School of Oriental Studies, Sapienza University of Rome*

The Chinese rare books collection of the BNCR, with approximately 2.000 titles and about 15.000 physical volumes, represents – for its richness and consistency - one of the most important and extensive collections of its kind preserved in Italy.

The original core of the Collection comes from the *Bibliotheca Maior* of the Jesuits, and is of extraordinary interest for sinological studies and research on the activities of Jesuit missionaries in China in the 16th-18th centuries. Their productive involvement with the Chinese Empire is reflected in the many Western science and technology treatises, works of Classic Chinese literature and especially Chinese adaptations of textbooks for the diffusion of the Catholic faith. Given the growing interest of the scientific community in this remarkable collection, the BNCR has activated a cataloguing project carried out in collaboration with specialists from Italian and Chinese Universities. The purpose of this cooperation is to create a tool that, in addition to providing the correct and up-to-date cataloguing data, also highlights the most relevant historical elements emerging from each volume in the collection.

---