

PROVENANCE RECORDS IN THE CERL THESAURUS AND IN MATERIAL EVIDENCE IN INCUNABULA

Cristina Dondi



Abstract: The integration and retrieval of records containing provenance information is at the core of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL)'s mission: provenance records can now be retrieved, when present, in the *Heritage of the Printed Book* database (HPB), in the CERL Portal (CP), in the CERL Thesaurus (CT), in Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI), in Paul Needham's *Index Possessorum Incunabulorum* (IPI), in Margaret Ford's *English Book Owners in Britain* (EBOB); help relating to provenance investigation can be sought at *Can You Help?*, provenance resources on the web can be found in the CERL website according to geographical area. Finally provenance issues, including the preparation of a comparative table of standards of provenance description adopted in Europe, are being discussed and prepared by the CERL Provenance and Standards for the description of provenance Working Group, chaired by Marieke van Delft, The Hague Royal Library.

This paper concentrates in particular on two integrated tools: the CERL Thesaurus and Material Evidence in Incunabula. The CT integrates Provenance authority files created by individual institutions and indexes of provenance from various publications. MEI offers a central repository for the copy-specific data on incunabula either not yet described (the majority) or described in scattered printed or electronic catalogues. MEI is linked to the Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue (=ISTC) of the British Library, from which it derives the bibliographic records, it accommodates the description of any aspect of the material evidence of incunabula, and retrieves it for sophisticated integrated searches, therefore significantly expanding the use of these resources, and of the data generated about them, as historical evidence.

Keywords: book provenance research – CERL – Consortium of European Research Libraries – MARC 21 – history of libraries – cataloguing – early prints – incunabulas – old prints – CERL Thesaurus – Material Evidence in Incunabula – Heritage of the Printed Book – HPB

The integration and retrieval of records containing provenance information is at the core of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL)'s mission: provenance records can now be retrieved, when present, in the *Heritage of the Printed Book* database (HPB <http://hpb.cerl.org>), in the CERL Portal (http://www.cerl.org/resources/cerl_portal), in the CERL Thesaurus (<http://thesaurus.cerl.org>), in Material Evidence in Incunabula (<http://incunabula.cerl.org>), in Paul Needham's *Index Possessorum Incunabulorum* (IPI <http://ipi.cerl.org>), in Margaret Ford's *English Book Owners in Britain* (EBOB <http://www.kallimachos.net/cgi-bin/ebob/spc.pl>); help relating to provenance investigation can be sought at *Can You Help?* (http://www.cerl.org/resources/provenance/can_you_help), provenance resources on the web can be found at <http://www.cerl.org/resources/provenance/> according to geographical area. Finally provenance issues, including the preparation of a comparative table of standards of provenance description adopted in Europe, are being discussed and prepared by the CERL Provenance and Standards for the description of provenance Working Group, chaired by Marieke van Delft, The Hague Royal Library (<http://www.cerl.org/collaboration/work/provenance/main>), whose remit include:

- working on the extraction of provenance information from HPB and the CERL Portal
- promoting the integration of provenance records into the CERL Thesaurus

- advising libraries which want to make their provenance records accessible internationally via the Cerl Thesaurus
- mapping vocabularies describing provenance
- mapping Unimarc/MARC21 provenance fields
- supporting scholars' provenance research via the Can You Help website
- making available to everybody in the CERL website scholarly research such as Meg Ford and Paul Needham's databases
- encouraging scholars to make their research available on the CERL website
- keeping the scholarly community informed of the latest projects in the CERL Online Provenance Resources

In this paper I would like to concentrate in particular on two integrated tools: the CERL Thesaurus and Material Evidence in Incunabula.

Every European and American Special Collections Library is made of *disiecta membra*: parts of collections dispersed at some point in the past, often many times over, because of inheritance, sale, donation, exchange, theft, war booty, sequestration, modernisation, neglect, or State policies towards cultural heritage (most notably the suppression of religious institutions and their libraries, which at different times affected most European countries from the 16th to the 20th century).

Evidence of the many lives and extensive travelling a book goes through, from the time of its production to the

time it enters the repository where it is presently kept, is often still preserved in the books themselves, in the form of ownership inscriptions, coat of arms, manuscript annotations, binding and decoration details, former shelf marks, elements collectively known as provenance (or copy-specific) information.

The recording of provenance information for manuscripts and rare books is an achievement of the 20th century. However, these provenance records still are, like the books they describe, *disiecta membra*, scattered in hundreds of paper publications and in hundreds, soon thousands, of electronic library catalogues.

The realisation of national bibliographies, that is electronic catalogue records¹ of all (or most...) editions in all libraries of each country, is a great achievement of the last decades². And the integration of Europe's bibliographic heritage is again an achievement of the last twenty years. It was the founding objective of CERL, and the *Heritage of the Printed Book* (HPB) Database has just passed the 4.5 million records (of books printed in Europe up to 1830/50) and is still growing.

But as is well-known, one bibliographic record is physically represented by various number of copies preserved in various number of local institutions: each of these copies has a different history, which is summarised in the copy-specific record (which once created, is generally attached to the bibliographic record).

The rationale of the organisations in charge of integrating nationally the bibliographic records coming from various local institutions has been, until recently at least, to export the bibliographic record into a unified central catalogue, but not the copy-specific record, which was kept locally, where it can be accessed only by users of the local OPAC. So, just to give an example, a scholar using the Rome, National Central Library OPAC may encounter a book formerly part of the collection of the Augustinian Hermits of S. Maria del Popolo in Rome, but there is no way, at present, to allow him/her to find other books with the same provenance now in other library collections; only by going through the endless number of catalogues and by sheer good luck he/she may stumble on a book from that same Augustinian collection today in the Bodleian Library of Oxford, and who knows where else the other *disiecta membra* may be?

There is the need to focus on the use that libraries and scholars can make of these provenance records, created at great expense of time, money, and expertise. It is clear that if we want to work seriously towards the reconstruction, for better understanding, of our common book heritage we have to integrate provenance records to facilitate systematic investigation across institutional and national boundaries.

For a number of years now CERL has been integrating Provenance authority files created by individual institutions and indexes of provenance from publications into the CERL Thesaurus (<http://thesaurus.cerl.org>), and more recently centralising copy-specific descriptions of incunabula into Material Evidence in Incunabula (<http://incunabula.cerl.org>).

These are two existing databases perfectly placed to integrate provenance data from scattered sources, and to be used by scholarship and education, to research, study, and understand our extraordinary rich and complex book heritage.

The CERL Thesaurus (CT) is a database set up just over ten years ago and freely available on the CERL Website. It contains forms of imprint places, imprint names, personal and institutional names as found in material printed before the middle of the 19th century – including variant spellings, forms in Latin and other languages, and fictitious names, an essential research tool for scholarship related to the European book heritage. Records from more than 70 authority files from CERL member libraries and other projects concentrating on the history of the book have been brought together and made searchable in one single system.

CT gives access to over 900,000 records of authors, translators, editors, artists, etc. that have been involved in the intellectual production of books, identified through more than 2,000,000 different name forms and almost 20,000 records of institutions with 40,000 different name forms.

Most importantly for the purpose of this paper, the CT includes over 20,000 records of persons and institutions linking out to library catalogues where books are recorded that once belonged to them. This number of records increases as provenance indexes and authority files are integrated into the CT. Currently the CT links out to more than 20 external bibliographic sources, such as the Index of Provenance of BSB-Ink (the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Inkunabelkatalog*, 1988-), or the provenance authority Index of the National Central Library of Rome.

Some sample records: the CT record for Philippus Melanchthon (CT no.: cnp 01317924) links out to entries in the library catalogue of the Bibliothèque Municipale of Lyon and of the Herzog-August-Bibliothek of Wolfenbüttel, which describe books once owned by the scholar.

The CT record for Collegio dei santi Biagio e Carlo ai Catinari, Biblioteca <Roma> (CT no.: cnc 00011728) links out to entries in the catalogue of the National Library of Rome (where some 830 books can still be found today), and in the catalogue of the Complutense University Library of Madrid (where only one book can be found today, for reasons which will be interesting to investigate). The entry also links out to one 'related record': Lelio Bonsi, who owned the Complutense book, probably before it entered the library of the Collegio.

While it is clear that this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the reconstruction of dispersed collections, we believe that the CT is the perfect environment in which to bring together provenance records, and to link out to wherever the surviving books, once part to that provenance, are today.

The Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI) was conceived of and planned by the author of this paper in 2010 to offer a central repository for the copy-specific data

¹ Electronic records with only author, title, imprint information, and location (city, library, shelfmark).

² See DONDI, Cristina. *Il contesto Europeo delle banche dati bibliografiche di ricerca*. In 'Il Libro antico tra catalogo storico e catalogazione elettronica', ed. Roberto Rusconi (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, anno CDIX, 2012; Contributi del Centro linceo interdisciplinare «Beniamino Segre» n. 127), 19–29.



Can You Help?

Identifying provenance evidence

MSHZSC



Query:
Can you help us identify these initials?

Created:
2013-08-19 (last changed: 2013-08-19) by Proveniensaarkaeolog

Description:
The letters M S H Z S C and the year 1634 printed in gold. The armours of Saxony, Clev and Prussia (with a small S at the eagles breast)? Could this belong to Duchess Magdalene Sibylle of Prussia (1586– 1659)?

Bibliographic Details:
Scherertz, Sigismund : Speculum tentationum spiritualium Das ist Spiegel der Geistlichen Anfechtungen, Lüneburg, 1633-62

Holding institution:
The Royal Library, Denmark

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Not a royal crown. This is a Fishermans (baron's coronet)...
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- Sum ex libris ?? ??**
Does word 4 start with a con- contraction??? "[con]juse" or "...
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- MSHZSC**
Thank you so much for your comment. Though I cannot find a du...
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- MSHZSC**
Maria Sophia Herzogin zu Sachsen Churfürstin. See David Sch...
posted by FarleyKatz
- Probably George Sa...**
Many thanks, Farley - still not quite solved, as I'd like to ...
posted by John Lancaster
- Arnaud de Pontac L...**
This is Arnaud de Pontac, mort le 4 février 1606 (it/wikiped...
posted by Martin Davies
- 18th century Engl...**
Is this a bookplate? Doesn't look like one. Could it just b...
posted by FarleyKatz
- Probably George Sa...**
Cauhoon is a recorded Irish name. Search, e.g., "Mary Cauhoon"
posted by FarleyKatz

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Discussion

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User Proveniensaarkaeolog wrote on 2013-08-21

Thank you so much for your comment. Though I cannot find a duchess nor churfürstin with the name of Maria Sophia. The mentioning of Johann Georg Hherzog zu Sachsen in the text, is also interesting.

User FarleyKatz wrote on 2013-08-21

Maria Sophia Herzogin zu Sachsen Churfürstin. See David Schirmer, Singende Rosen oder Liebes- und Tugend-Lieder (1654) (Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen 2003). At end: Bibliographie der Originaldrucke, p. 63", on line at books.google.com/books?id=k8p_y43twDiC&pg=PA63.

CERL Database – Can You Help?

on incunabula either not yet described (the majority) or described in scattered printed or electronic catalogues. MEI is linked to the Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue (=ISTC) of the British Library, from which it derives the bibliographic records, it accommodates the description of any aspect of the material evidence of incunabula, and retrieves it for sophisticated integrated searches, therefore significantly expanding the use of these resources, and of the data generated about them, as historical evidence. Not only former owners, but also every other piece of evidence (a distinctive style of decoration or binding, the date of a manuscript note, etc) is treated as a valuable clue for provenance, therefore it is geographically located and chronologically dated. This makes it possible to track the movement of books across Europe and through the centuries, to quantify and assess import-export flows in the 15th c. as well as to study the formation of book collections in the later period. It also allows to investigate bibliographical and copy specific data in combined searches, offering for the first time the possibility to answer questions relating to the early trade in printed books which have been impossible to answer until now. For example

how many and which Venetian editions were exported, sold, and used in Germany in the 15th and 16th centuries, and, even more specifically, how many and which ones were used within religious institutions, or by students; or which was the market, national and international, of editions of the classics printed in Brescia, and so on. MEI and CERL Thesaurus are fully integrated: the Thesaurus acts as authority file for MEI; MEI directly feeds new provenance records into CT. If a person or institution is already in CT, the linking with MEI will indicate that the person or institution owned the early edition described in MEI, in so doing contributing to the reconstruction of the book collection; if the person or institution are not yet present in CT, it is possible to create a new Thesaurus provenance record directly from within MEI.


The database was developed by Alex Jahnke of the Data Conversion Group of the University of Göttingen (=DCG), with funding granted by the British Academy to Prof. Nigel Palmer (Oxford) and the author of this paper. It is maintained by CERL and is freely available on the CERL website. Any library can contribute to it freely, and participation is welcome. At present some 40 European and

American libraries are contributing, from very large collections such as the British Library and Harvard libraries, to very small ones, such as the Seminar or the Chapter library of Monza (Milan). Moreover, data from a number of printed catalogues are being reversed into MEI, in the awareness that only by placing these fragments of library collections within an international context will we be able to understand and study their full historical meaning and begin to trace the dispersion of collections. A pleasant side effect of this provenance data sharing is that librarians get to know others in institutions with which until then they had no links what so ever, because they discover that they actually share a common heritage.

A number of innovative features have been introduced to enhance the possibility of producing both qualitative and

quantitative research; for these I would like to direct the reader to the database's website and its Help pages.

With some 30,000 editions inventoried in the ISTC, and an average survival rate of 40 copies per edition³, we are fortunate to still be able to rely on the evidence provided by some 1 million and 200,000 extant 15th-century printed books. Whilst fully aware of the fact that this number represents only a fraction of what was originally produced (and therefore that we have to use other documentary evidence to complement our investigations), today's scholarship cannot afford to ignore the material evidence of incunabula. Decades of quality cataloguing and the support of powerful integrated technology can now make possible the exploitation of all these valuable records for historical research.




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Can You Help?


identifying provenance evidence


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I would appreciate assistance in identifying the initials in the monogram
asked by [Rolambius](#). 2013-09-04


 **OK / KO monogram stamped in red**
Identity of OK / KO sought
asked by [John Lancaster](#). 2013-08-30


 **Sum ex libris ????**
Elucidation of this inscription sought.
asked by [John Lancaster](#). 2013-08-25


 **MSHZSC**
Can you help us identify these initials?
asked by [Proveniensarkaeolog](#). 2013-08-19


 **WC binding (17th century)**
Identification of WC sought
asked by [John Lancaster](#). 2013-08-13


Recently Solved Queries

 **Probably George Sanderson, 5th Viscount Castleton (1631-1714)**
Identification sought.
identified by [Heather Wolfe, Folger Shakespeare Library](#). 2013-09-06

 **Arnaud de Pontac (1599-1681)**
Reading of the name sought, and any additional information.
identified by [Martin Davies/John Lancaster](#). 2013-08-17

 **Johann Wilhelm Egloff ab Pael**
Seeking the identification of this individual; at least 5 bindings with the same armorial device and monogram are known, all dated between 1627 and 1659
identified by [Ulrich Seelbach](#). 2013-08-09

 **Prince Lev Pavlovich Urusov (1839-1928)**
Can anyone help identifying this russian bookplate?
identified by [Nazard](#). 2013-08-09

 **Robert Paston, 1st Earl of Yarmouth (Norfolk) and his wife Rebecca**
Seeking help in identifying the English crowned monogram "R R" (or "R A R") which appears on the binding depicted in Maggs Catalogue 1212 item 54
identified by [Michael Laird](#). 2013-05-24


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³ According to the calculation done by Paul Needham and by the author of this paper, based on the manual counting of 10% of editions randomly selected.

18

PROVENIENČNÍ ZNAČKY A POZNÁMKY V DATABÁZÍCH “CERL THESAURUS” A “MATERIAL EVIDENCE IN INCUNABULA”

Cristina Dondi

Integrace a vyhledávání záznamů, které obsahují informace o knižní provenienci, stojí v centru pozornosti Konsorcia evropských vědeckých knihoven (CERL). Záznamy obsahující informace o provenienci lze v současné době vyhledávat v databázi *Heritage of the Printed Book* (HPB), v *CERL Portal* (CP), v autoritní bázi *CERL Thesaurus* (CT), v databázi exemplářových specifik prvotisků *Material Evidence in Incunabula* (MEI), v soupisu vlastníků prvotisků *Index Possessorum Incunabulorum* (IPI) Paula Needhama a v soupisu vlastníků knih *English Book Owners in Britain* (EBOB) Margarety Ford. Webová stránka *Can You Help?*, která je součástí *CERL Portal*, nabízí pomoc při identifikaci neurčených provenienčních záznamů v knihách. Na webových stránkách CERL jsou k dispozici odkazy na online zdroje k problematice knižní provenience řazené podle geografického kritéria. Problematikou výzkumu provenience, včetně přípravy srovnávací tabulky pravidel a instrukcí pro popis provenienčních záznamů uplatňovaných v rámci celé Evropy, se v konsorciu CERL zabývá *Pracov-*

ní skupina pro výzkum a popis provenience (CERL Provenance and Standards for the description of provenance Working Group), jíž předsedá Marieke van Delft z Královské knihovny v Haagu.

Tento příspěvek se věnuje především dvěma integrovaným bázím: *CERL Thesaurus* a *Material Evidence in Incunabula*. CT propojuje provenienční autoritní záznamy vytvořené různými institucemi a rejstříky proveniencí z nejrůznějších publikací. MEI poskytuje centrální úložiště pro exemplářové informace týkající se prvotisků, a to buď dosud nekatalogizovaných, jichž je většina, nebo již katalogizovaných v řadě tištěných či elektronických katalogů. MEI je propojeno s *Incunabula Short-Title Catalogue* (ISTC) Britské knihovny, odkud přebírá bibliografické záznamy. MEI obsahuje exemplářový popis prvotisků, a to ve všech jeho aspektech a zpřístupňuje jej v rámci integrovaného inteligentního vyhledávání, čímž významně zvyšuje informační hodnotu těchto zdrojů a informací z nich generovaných coby historického pramene.

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identifying provenance evidence

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CERL Database – Can You Help?