Aim of the conference

This conference celebrates the 50th anniversary of the publication of Léon Voet's seminal study about the Officina Plantiniana, titled The Golden Compasses. The aim of this conference is to reflect on the impact of Voet's masterpiece and to evaluate it in the light of 50 years of continued research about the Officina. In addition, by gathering international experts from different countries – with all of which the Antwerp publishing house established and maintained firm ties – we seek to identify productive research questions left, completely or in part, unexplored by Voet.

The conference is preceded by a Miræus Lecture at the Museum Plantin-Moretus about Plantin's strategies to finance his publications in the 1560s. The lecture will be held on 12 December 2019 at 19:00 by Mark McConnell (Washington, DC).

The conference runs on Friday 13 December 2019 from 9:00 until 17:30. The keynote speech will be delivered by Prof. Dr. David McKitterick, Trinity College, Cambridge (UK).

The conference dinner on Friday evening 13 December 2019 at 19:00 is optional.

The social programme on Saturday morning 14 December 2019 runs between 10:00 and 13:00 and is also optional.

Miræus Lecture

Evening programme – Thursday, 12 December 2019
Venue: Museum Plantin-Moretus, Vrijdagmarkt 22, 2000 Antwerp
Timing: 19:00
Doors open at 18:45, last entry at 19:10
Lecture in English, free entrance – registration obliged

Mark McConnell, Washington, DC

How did Early Modern publishers make decisions? Business insights from Christopher Plantin's cost records

Printing technology transformed the production of books in early modern times, with deep implications for the circulation of ideas. But the new technology also created a very significant business problem: publishing risk. The advantages of the new technology were available only if a publisher
advanced large sums of money to print an entire edition, and accepted the risk that the copies might not sell. It is well recognized that publishing risk helped determine which books were printed, and what form those books took. But lack of data has precluded a systematic study of the question. Mark McConnell is compiling a database of the detailed cost accounts that were kept by the printer Christopher Plantin in the 1560s. These data shed considerable light on the business calculations that governed publishers’ decisions, with implications for the subject matter of books printed, the number of copies, the inclusion of illustrations, and the features that positioned a book in the marketplace, such as format, paper quality and font selection. Mr. McConnell will present preliminary insights on these questions, drawn from his ongoing research.

The Miræus Lectures are an initiative of Flanders Book Historical Society.

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**Conference - Friday, 13 December 2019**

Venue: Kapel van de Grauwzusters, Lange Sint-Annastraat 7, Antwerp

9:00 - Registration

10:00 - Welcome address

10:30 - Papers session 1

**Denis Pallier** (independent scholar, Paris)

*La succursale de Plantin à Paris*


**Antonio Davila Perez** (Universidad de Cádiz)

*The Biblia Regia beyond the Plantin Press: Inquisition and censorship; slander and fame*

In the first volume of The Plantin Press (Amsterdam 1980–1983) L. Voet dedicates thirty-six pages to an exhaustive bibliographical description of the Biblia Regia that still remains a mandatory reference for the study of the typographical characteristics and contents of that Bible. This presentation will focus on the controversial reception of the Polyglot Bible of Antwerp immediately after leaving Plantin’s printing office. The director of this great typographic project, Benito Arias Montano, had to
face two main enemies: in Spain it was the theologian from Salamanca León de Castro who pursued Montano and his Bible to raise a complaint before the court of the Spanish Holy Inquisition in 1576. In Flanders, Arias Montano was attacked by one of the most brilliant European theologians, the Bishop of Roermond Wilhelm van der Lindt, alias Lindanus (1525–1588). The controversy between Arias Montano and Lindanus reached such a degree of obstinacy that it extended until the death of the protagonists; the reason for this mutual hostility must be sought in a false accusation by Arias Montano and a series of retractions not entirely satisfactory. The aim of this presentation is to flesh out our knowledge of some aspects on the reception of the Biblia Regia, mainly in light of unpublished or recently published documents.

11:30 - Coffee Break

12:00 - Papers session 2

**Renaud Milazzo** (Università degli Studi di Milano)

*European Book Economy and Market in the 16th Century: new perspectives*

If the manuscript M 296 kept at the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp was used as a basis for Léon Voet's essential bibliography of books published and printed by Christophe Plantin between 1555 and 1589, this incredible document is rarely exploited in the second volume of the Golden compasses. Indeed, the manuscript M 296 is a commercial tool used by the Officina Plantiniana that shows that Plantin and his heirs had a perfect knowledge of the book market and the pricing practices of the printers and publishers located in the main production centres in the southern Netherlands, France, Holy Roman Empire, Italy and England. More than 20,000 books are sorted into alphabetical order and by language area, city and printer. In most cases, the format, the number of sheets used to print a title and the bookstore price expressed in different local monies of account, are mentioned. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate that from the point of view of the History of the Book, this document offers new and unexplored perspectives that complement and expand Léon Voet's findings on the European book economy and market in the 16th century.

**Heleen Wyffels** (KULeuven)

*The power of possibility: Jeanne Rivière and the keys to the Plantin empire*

Jeanne Rivière is arguably the most unobtrusive actor in the history of the first generations of the Officina Plantiniana. Léon Voet gave the wife and widow of Christophe Plantin the title of 'loyal helpmate' to her husband and his description of her gives the impression of an uneducated, meek woman, devoted to her husband and her household duties. Furthermore, her painted portrait adds a rather uninviting and morose look to this picture. In this paper, I will look at Rivière from another perspective: as Plantin's universal heir, she proved to be the key to the continuation of the famous printing house. The archives of the Officina Plantiniana offer unique insight into the personal dynamics within this family business and the role of family members of either sex. Rivières case will show how widows, even those we tend to cast aside as dull housewives, were often key figures in the early modern printing industry.

13:00 - Lunch break
Kristof Selleslach (Museum Plantin-Moretus)
The instructions of Balthasar Moretus II to his future widow and heirs

A major weakness in the continuation of any family business is the succession of the next generation. Balthasar Moretus II (1615-1674) was well aware of this issue. During his lifetime he wrote down at least 3 instructions to his future widow and heirs. As The Golden Compasses reveals, Léon Voet was unacquainted with the instructions and its remarkable content. In the instructions Balthasar Moretus II discussed in detail how to run a printing business and in particular the Plantin Press. He paid much attention to the transfer of the family business to his future widow and heirs. He included a detailed road map for the taking-over. For example Balthasar Moretus II recommended to organize an auction of the huge stock of books. He explained in detail how to tackle such an auction. The instructions shed new light on a key era of the Plantin Press. For instance Balthasar Moretus II appears to be the architect of the exclusive specialisation in service books, and not his son Balthasar III. In this paper I will discuss what Balthasar Moretus II proposed in his instructions, and what his widow and heirs actually have done after his death.

Noël Golvers (KULeuven)
The Officina Plantiniana in Antwerp and its role in the communication between China and Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries

In the second half of the 17th century, and again in the early 18th century, Antwerp was one of the ‘hubs’ in the communication between the – dramatically expanding – Jesuit mission in China and the European continent. The Officina – always in close contact with the Antwerp Professed House, also through members of the family in the Society – was an almost obligate destination for the mission procurators periodically returning from China to Europe, for acquiring books for the Jesuit libraries in China, both Plantiniana and other editions (with as most ‘spectacular’ moment 6 December 1616, when Terrentius-Trigault bought 332 books). In addition, the ‘officina’ was also an important hub in the exchange of letters between (Central) Europe and China, and in delivering books ordered in China from Holland, Germany and France (the ‘vicinia’). This function was revitalized between 1718–1730, when the Jesuit Professed House and its procurator, Petrus Maelcamp, the Moretus house and the ‘Ostend Company’ realized a synergia, and a very efficient communication channel between Europe and China. Testimonies of all this are extant books, inscriptions, and a corpus of letters.

15:30 - Coffee Break

16:00 – Keynote lecture

David McKitterick (Cambridge University)
Antwerp and Cambridge; different opportunities and different challenges

Plantin and his successors faced worlds very different from those faced by the earliest printers to the University Of Cambridge. The press at Cambridge was founded in 1583. It was in a small provincial university town, a day's journey from London. It had little international trade, and there were no local
skills in illustration.
Antwerp was a thriving international city. Yet the two presses shared much in common, as they recruited authors and sought credit from members of the book trades in other places. How much can we learn by comparing these two places, that seem so different, and yet so similar? What kinds of evidence survive? What were the similarities? What were the differences between being a printer and publisher with a large business and easy access to international trade, and being a small one, always dependent on others?

17:00 - Conclusion

19:00 - Conference dinner

Social programme

Conference dinner
Friday 13 December 2019, 19:00
Where: De Rosenobel, Blauwmoezelstraat 2, Antwerp
A vegetarian/vegan restaurant in the old city center of Antwerp, in the shadow of our cathedral
Places are limited and will be dealt with on a first come, first serve basis
The fee for the conference dinner is €45 per person – the number of places is limited
Reservations are possible until 8 December 2019 or until all places are taken

Visit Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp
Saturday 14 December 2019
Places are limited and will be dealt with on a first come, first serve basis
Reservations are possible until Sunday 8 December 2019 or until all places are taken
Optional, free of charge, social programme
Venue: Museum Plantin-Moretus
Address: Vrijdagmarkt 22–23, Antwerp; meeting point on the square next to the entrance of the museum
Conference participants and their companion can choose one or more activities, depending on time and availability.
Places are limited and will be dealt with on a first come, first serve basis.
Reservations are possible until Sunday 8 December 2019 or until all places are taken.
Please use the registration form.

10:00–11:00: Show and tell at the new Reading Room about historical business documents related to the theme of the conference (max. 15 persons)
and/or
11:00–13:00: Guided tour at the Museum Plantin-Moretus in English (max. 15 persons)