



Universität
Basel

Research Project

A Workshop for Humanists in XVI. century Europe. Erasmus von Rotterdam's Media Strategies at Froben's Printing Press

Third-party funded project

Project title A Workshop for Humanists in XVI. century Europe. Erasmus von Rotterdam's Media Strategies at Froben's Printing Press

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In sixteenth century Basel printers and scholars collaborated for the making of the written culture for humanists. They ideated and successfully employed economic, cultural, visual, material, and commercial strategies that secured to Basel the reputation of a world city of humanist printing.

In sixteenth century Europe printing technology and mass production made of the printed book the privileged media for communication. Those who had the ability to manage with the exigencies of the market and those of culture, connecting the dealings of entrepreneurs and the demands of scholars through the technical knowledge of the craft, created a powerful alliance that enhanced the impact of the written words on the circulation and reception of knowledge. Johann and Hieronymus Froben's printworks offers itself as a point of vantage to observe the making of bestsellers for humanists in sixteenth century Europe. The research recollects Froben's print company catalogue between 1491 and 1540 and reconstructs the editorial policy of the printing house in order to evaluate its importance for the transformation of Basel into a world city in humanistic book production. It investigates the intellectual, technical, visual, financial and commercial mechanisms employed for the production and dissemination of the books, especially during the energetic participation of the distinguished humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam, in the success of Froben's business activity between 1514 and 1536, in order to grasp the level of attraction that Basel exerted over publishers, printers, scholars and workers of the time.ăă

The research is firmly rooted in the methodological and epistemological framework of the history of print culture on one hand, and the history of humanist learning, on the other. On the basis of extensive investigation in epistolary sources and of the discerning application of the most recent paratextual analysis the research adds an important contribution to our understanding of a key moment in the history of media in the early sixteenth century, shedding light on the reciprocal imbrication – and their mutual reinforcement – of printing and humanism to shape European modernity.

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