

Distribution of Buxheim Books by Date

The 1883 Carl Förster auction catalog is to date still the most comprehensive book catalog of the Buxheim library that we have. Aside from the massive internal book catalogs of 1619 (*Bibliotheca Buxiana*) and the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (*Compendiosus Catalogus Librorum*), which are still not transcribed, the auction catalog offers us a partial view of the library's collection just before its disbursement at the Munich sale of some 4507 numbered items, divided into ten categories. The largest of these groups is the first one, namely Theology and Philosophy. This makes sense, in that one would expect a Carthusian library to focus on such works, as opposed to natural history, law, art, geography, science, or other subjects, which are also represented but in much lower numbers.

While the catalog as a whole only lists some 4500 numbered items out of a library thought to have held at least 20,000 volumes, nevertheless we might take it on faith that this quarter of the whole is to some extent representative of the entire collection. It does not seem likely that some large or significant number of books were left out of the auction for any other reason than that Ludwig Rosenthal acquired many of the unlisted books en masse. It is also fair to say that the auction probably presented some of the more valuable books, but aside from the manuscripts and incunables, these were most likely not determined by author, date of publication, or subject matter.

The first category, Theology and Philosophy, comprises catalog numbers 1-2363a, or about half of the listings. There are actually 2376 items listed, given that some items are inserted with an "a" or "b" identifier after the number, some numbers are doubled, and some numbers omitted. Furthermore, this category consists, ostensibly, only of books printed after 1499, since the incunables have their own section, namely the third (manuscripts are separated in the second section), as well as some few in the addendum category. However, it turns out that a few incunables, 12 in number, from between 1488 and 1499 have found their way in among the printed books after 1499.

One other important feature of these printed books, especially those from the sixteenth century, is that the binders often combined a number of different printed works into a single volume. Sometimes these are similar in subject, sometimes not. For shorter printed tracts, it made economical sense to combine these into a heftier volume that would warrant the labor and cost of what were still very expensive bindings of wood, leather, used parchment, and much work by the book binder. In other cases, one of the monks might have wanted a particular set of texts bound together as an anthology of sorts. Thus we have more dated works in our collection than we do volumes. This practice gradually fell out of favor in the seventeenth century and beyond, when book dealers most often offered books already bound, and authors were more likely to write works that would appear on the market as a distinctive volume by itself.

We might gain some insight into the nature of the Buxheim collection and its collectors by looking at the distribution of the dates of publication among this first and largest category that,

by the nature of its subject matter, is probably most representative of the collection as a whole. We initially can determine the following facts about the first category of auction books, Theology and Philosophy:

1. Of the numbered items 1-2363a, there are 2806 separately dated texts (not volumes) total.
2. There are 2766 works with print dates in the 300 years between 1500 and 1799.
3. A few texts fall outside of these dates, namely 12 from 1488-1499, 4 from 1807-1876 (after secularization in 1803), and 24 texts for which the date cannot be determined.

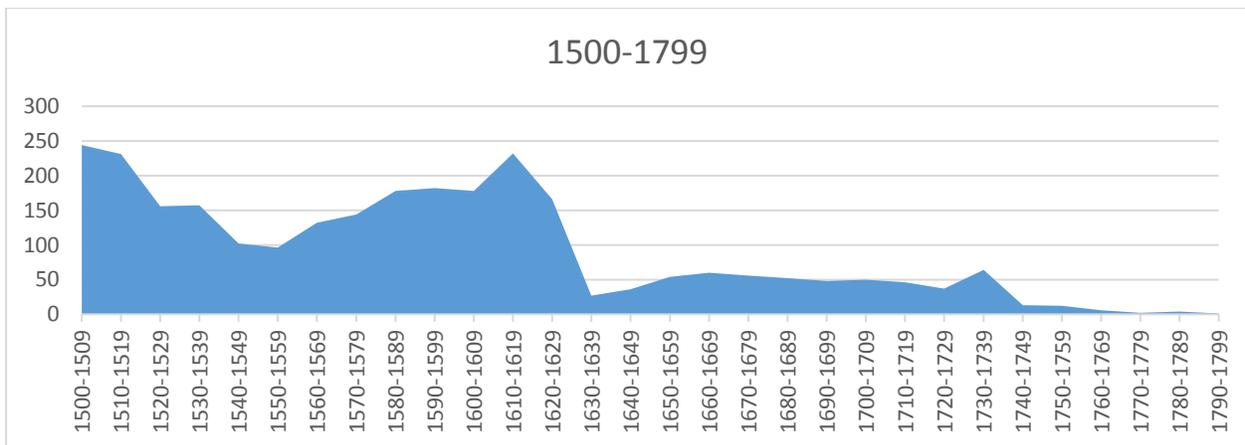
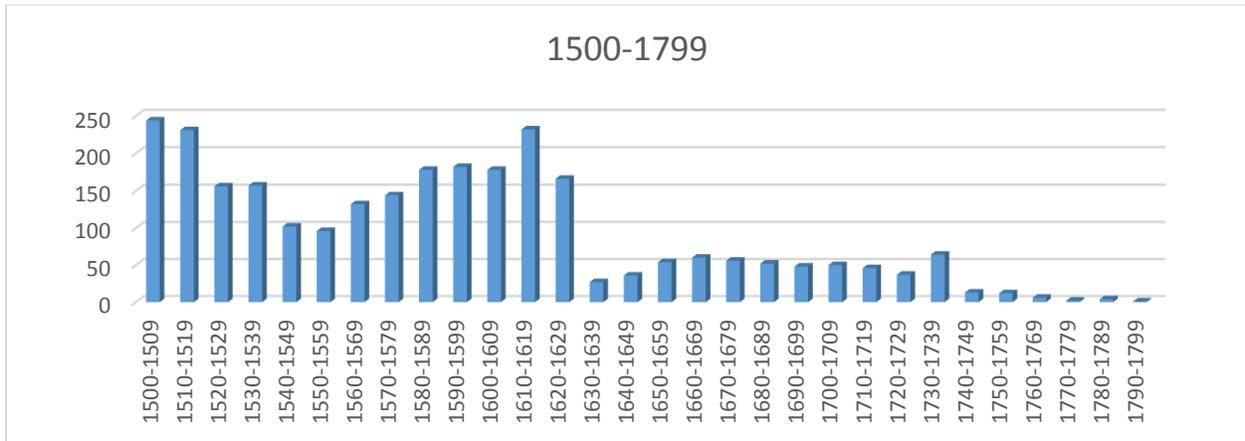
The distribution of these 2766 printed texts by publication date can be summarized as follows. The initial grouping of the data into groups of ten years allows us better to analyze the data, giving us 30 groups to work with as opposed to 300 individual years.

Decade	Texts
1500-1509	244
1510-1519	231
1520-1529	156
1530-1539	157
1540-1549	102
1550-1559	96
1560-1569	132
1570-1579	144
1580-1589	178
1590-1599	182
1600-1609	178
1610-1619	232
1620-1629	166
1630-1639	27
1640-1649	36

1650-1659	54
1660-1669	60
1670-1679	56
1680-1689	52
1690-1699	48
1700-1709	50
1710-1719	46
1720-1729	37
1730-1739	64
1740-1749	13
1750-1759	12
1760-1769	6
1770-1779	2
1780-1789	4
1790-1799	1
Total	2766

Note: Averages for each year in a decade can easily be calculated with a division by 10. The average number of books published per year over 300 years is 9.2. The high average is 24.4 per year and the low is less than 1. The absolute high in any year is 33 (1502) and the low is 0 (multiple years, especially after 1748).

These data can be graphically represented in the following two charts:



Several features immediately stand out from these charts:

1. The first few decades show a large acquisition of books from the early sixteenth century, whether by purchase or donation.
2. The numbers of books printed in the middle of the sixteenth century declines fairly significantly, but with a rebound by the end of the century and the early part of the seventeenth century to acquisition rates near those of the first decades of the 1500's.
3. There is a dramatic fall in the number of books printed after 1630 to levels not seen before, and this lower number of books by decade, although it recovers somewhat starting in 1650, never recuperates to anything close to the pre-1630 numbers.
4. The number of books added to the collection in the second half of the eighteenth century is basically insignificant.

These falls and recoveries, or lack thereof, seem not to be coincidental. A pattern emerges that can find its correlation in the history of the charterhouse and its environs. The two main periods of decline, the second quarter of the sixteenth and the second quarter of the seventeenth centuries coincide with major events that negatively impacted the charterhouse.

The first is the Reformation and its profound effect on central and northern Europe, especially German-speaking areas. Martin Luther's reforms quickly gained acceptance in many areas of present-day Germany, including the south. Memmingen, the closest large town to Buxheim, itself imperial and therefore independent, joined the ranks of the reformists early on. By 1521, Memmingen had become a center of the Reformation, and the so-called 12 Articles or Statements of Principle directed against the imperial Swabian League were written there in March, 1525. The next month, the Great Peasants' War erupted in southwestern Germany, first in Kempten, about 30 kilometers south of Memmingen, and then near Ulm, about 50 kilometers north of Memmingen. The peasant troops were defeated at the battle of Leipheim and withdrew, and although the war lasted another few months, it ended with the total defeat of the peasants by the imperial forces.

The effects of the Reformation and its upheavals were certainly felt at Charterhouse Buxheim as elsewhere. Even though the imperial town of Memmingen had pledged to protect the charterhouse, this pledge was essentially null and void by 1525, when the town allied itself with the peasants' cause. The monks fled the chaos of the Peasants' War in the spring of that year, while the peasants themselves took over the monastery, desecrated its altars, and plundered some of the valuables in the treasury. The library itself does not seem to have suffered any significant theft or destruction, as far as we can tell. Apostasy and conversion also caused many of the monks to renounce their vows and leave the monastery altogether. In short, by 1543 the charterhouse had only two monks and two lay brothers left in residence.

Memmingen joined the Protestant Schmalkaldic League in 1531 against the Holy Roman Empire and its Catholic nobility. Although a tense peace was maintained for about 15 years, the Schmalkaldic War broke out in the Saxon territories in 1546, the year Martin Luther died. By the following year, the war had expanded to southwestern Germany, with imperial forces taking Ulm and the territory of Württemberg and defeating the Palatine Elector. Ultimately, the Protestant army was defeated at the battle of Mühlberg in Saxony on the 24th of April, 1547.

Buxheim and its charterhouse also suffered from this conflict. Troops from Memmingen occupied the charterhouse in 1546, arrested the monks, and forbade monastic habit and choir prayer. The prior and procurator were able to escape beforehand, but the monks had to submit to their Protestant occupiers, as Memmingen confiscated property and valuables. After the defeat at Mühlberg and at the subsequent Diet of Augsburg in 1548, the former prior of Buxheim Charterhouse, Dietrich Loher, was able to secure a restoration of the monastery by Memmingen, and furthermore convinced the emperor to revoke Memmingen's role as protector of the charterhouse. The charterhouse was placed directly under the protection of the House of Habsburg by King Ferdinand I, the Archduke of Austria, and granted a coat of arms

and seal, placing it directly under the authority of the emperor himself, its security guaranteed by the Duchy of Swabia.

The charterhouse was able to recover fairly quickly under Prior Loher and his successors. We see in our numbers of printed books from this period that a decline started already in the 1520's and 30's. A lowpoint was reached in 1542 (8 books), with similar low numbers evident from 1545-47 (9, 8, 5), but beginning around 1550 the numbers began to go up until around 1610, when they had again reached a number comparable to that of the early 1500's.

Then the second catastrophe struck Buxheim and the rest of Germany: the Thirty Years' War (1618-48). Although spared in the early years of the war, Memmingen and Buxheim later both became centers of military activity, first when the town was occupied by Wallenstein and his imperial Catholic troops in 1630, and then as Swedish troops made their way to southwest Germany in 1631, entering Memmingen in April, 1632. The 14 professed monks and 6 hospites monks fled to the charterhouses of Ittingen, Schnals, Seitz, and Walditz. Three monks remained in Buxheim, the vicar, procurator, and coadjutor, with the vicar taking responsibility for the parish of Buxheim. In 1633, Procurator Benignus Reich was wounded by a Swedish soldier and subsequently died of his injuries. It was not until 1635 that the monks were able to return to Buxheim after Swedish troops had withdrawn.

Despite a respite of a little more than ten years, the conflict returned to Buxheim and environs in 1646, shortly before the end of the war. Twenty-five regiments of Bavarian and imperial troops were stationed in and around Buxheim, with the charterhouse serving as the headquarters of Archduke Wilhelm Leopold of Austria, the imperial commander in the area. The monks fled the monastery again, this time to Memmingen, under the protection of the Bavarian troops. The following year, Sweden and Bavaria agreed to a truce, which allowed Sweden to occupy Memmingen once again and the monks to return to Buxheim. Prince Maximilian of Bavaria ended the truce in September, 1647, and ordered the siege and capture of Memmingen, this time with imperial and Bavarian forces under the command of General Enkevort. The siege was a success and forced the capitulation of the Swedes on November 23rd. They subsequently withdrew from Swabia, thus effectively ending the war in the southwestern German territories.

By the 1680's, Buxheim Charterhouse had entered its second great restoration and revival period. In the last years of the decade, Ignaz Waibel was completing work on his famous choir stalls. By around 1700, the Baroque had gained hold in Buxheim with the work by the Zimmermann brothers and others, including the building of a brand new library, with ceiling frescoes painted by Johann Baptist Zimmermann and signed 1710. Although there was some military activity in the area from 1702-04 as part of the War of Spanish Succession, Buxheim was spared the upheavals of the previous war.

It seems, however, that the acquisition of new books in the eighteenth century, despite a new library to house them, never reached anything more than moderate levels, certainly nothing like what the previous two centuries had seen. By the mid-eighteenth century, book

acquisitions seem to have virtually ceased altogether, and with secularization already threatening in the Habsburg lands in the 1780's and then realized under Napoleon in 1802 and 1803, the library collection was frozen in time. It was not until the charterhouse came into the possession of the counts Waldbott von Bassenheim in 1810 that activity in the library picked up again. The counts added their own personal books to the collection, while adding the library of Heggbach Abbey, and in 1820 hired the well-known monk and librarian, Matthias Schiltegger, to oversee the former charterhouse library and its additions.

In conclusion, it seems plausible that the distribution of print dates in those books listed in the Theology and Philosophy section of the 1883 auction catalog, numbering some 2,766 texts in all, does reflect the events that affected the charterhouse over the course of its 400-year history. Periods of war and conflict affected the monastery economically, and this would certainly have had an impact on how the monks could have continued to buy books on the open market when there were more pressing financial matters at stake. It also seems, however, that the active acquisition of new books was suppressed in the eighteenth century, despite the monastery's wealth, evident in its wholesale rebuilding program. The Carthusians had a great library at Buxheim, accumulated over three centuries, and it is possible that this was enough. The will to continue to grow the library, at least in the areas of Theology and Philosophy, was simply not a part of the charterhouse's mission in the eighteenth century.