Call for Papers for the International Conference
‘The Book of Books: The Libro de los Epítomes in Context’
Copenhagen, 28-30 August 2024

Introduction
The conference ‘The Book of Books: The Libro de los Epítomes in Context’ will bring together an international group of scholars with different areas of expertise, investigation angles and methodologies to exchange knowledge, findings and research questions on the topics of book production, circulation and reception, the history of libraries and cultural history, with specific focus on the 16th century. While based on themes which have flourished around the investigation of one single manuscript, the ultimate objective of this gathering is to contribute to the larger understanding of how the dynamics of production, conservation and consumption of handwritten and printed books simultaneously were both shaped by and informed the key cultural developments of early modern society.

The manuscript
AM 377 fol. is one of the several catalogues and indices devised by Hernando Colón (Cordoba 1488 - Sevilla 1539) to manage his library. The so-called Libro de los epítomes contains nearly 2000 abstracts of as many texts from Colón’s library. Long thought to be lost, the Libro was identified in 2019 as part of a nucleus of twenty-one Spanish manuscripts in the Arnamagnæan Collection at the University of Copenhagen, internationally renowned for its early Scandinavian holdings.

Over the past years, the Book of Books team, based at the University of Copenhagen, has researched different aspects of the Libro, particularly focusing on its material features, its place in Colón’s library and its connections with the other tools of his sophisticated knowledge management system, the strategies of composition of the summaries it contains and the circumstances of its arrival in Denmark.

The conference
The Book of Books conference will be an opportunity to mark the conclusion of the first phase of work on the Libro, sharing with the wider scholarly community what we have learnt so far about this incredible manuscript and the library it comes from.

The conference will moreover be an occasion to place our work in the wider European and global context, one which is closer, in fact, to that in which the Libro was conceived as a bibliographical tool and produced as a material object and a literary work.

Below is an indication of the themes we would like to explore during the conference. We encourage scholars to engage with these themes starting from the objects of their own research, through an interdisciplinary and transnational approach.

In particular, we would be interested in comparing research objects, findings and methodologies with other case studies dealing with the same period (early modern) in a broader geographical context.

Themes
1) Collecting, cataloguing and managing information
How did 16th-century collectors deal with the ‘information overload’ of their times, and how did this ‘overload’ influence their organisational and cataloguing strategies? What was the impact of the printing press in this specific area of intellectual production?

2) Writing in libraries
How did 16th-century libraries function as places of production of written material, such as catalogues, scholarly or literary works, personal or institutional records? Who were the key figures involved, and what were the processes and strategies? How are these reflected in the materiality of the written products? How did these centres of written production interact with the surrounding cultural landscape?
3) Practices of reading, early modern literacy and libraries
How did late mediaeval and early modern readers read their texts? Were scholars trained in specific reading techniques or approaches? What does their performance of reading tell us about their perception of the book? How did multilingualism influence reading practices and understanding of the texts?

4) Global libraries / universal libraries
How did the geographical expeditions of the late 15th and early 16th centuries impact the creation and maintenance of libraries? What do the terms ‘global library’ and ‘universal library’ mean in the context of the 16th century?

5) Creation and dispersion of 16th-century libraries
Is it possible to identify and compare common patterns in the strategies of acquisition and reasons for dispersion of 16th-century libraries? How did these interact with the economic and social situation of the time (book prices, commercial networks, trends and agents)? How did these circumstances impact the structure, functioning and afterlife of different types of libraries or sections within the libraries?

6) Diplomatic and intellectual networks in the circulation of written cultural heritage
How did different kinds of networks (generational, personal, artistic, political etc.) influence the transfer of literary and artistic works in the 16th century? What role did diplomatic missions and treaties play in the creation of libraries? How did networks impact the development of contemporary trends and personal tastes?

In conclusion, it is our hope that this mutual exchange of knowledge and perspectives will help conference participants to contextualise their own investigations, but also to add elements to a wider picture and create new stimuli to look ahead for future research directions. It is expected that a selection of essays emanating from the conference will be published in an edited volume.

Submission guidelines:
The conference welcomes contributions from a variety of disciplines, including, but not limited to, book history, bibliography, palaeography and codicology, history, philology, literature and library science. We particularly encourage transnational research angles and interdisciplinary approaches.

Please note that we might be able to offer travel and/or accommodation support to speakers.

If you would like to present a paper, please send the following to the address bookofbooks@hum.ku.dk by Monday 19 February 2024:

- A 500-word abstract outlining the proposed presentation
- A 150-word bio
- Your affiliation and contact details
- Three or four keywords that apply to the content of your proposed paper

Important dates:
Submission deadline: 19 February 2024
Notification of acceptance: by 17 March 2024
Conference dates: 28-30 August 2024

Conference venues:
Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters
University of Copenhagen
Royal Danish Library

Conference committee:
Joana-Isabel Duyster Borredà
Matthew James Driscoll
Alessandro Gnasso
Morten Heiberg
René Hernández Vera
Matilde Malaspina

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