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Lost Books printed in French before 1601

ALEXANDER S. WILKINSON¹

Abstract

Research into the history of the book before 1601 has reached an important moment. Within five years, scholars will have at their disposal short title catalogues covering almost all of the print domains of Europe. Such significant advances in research infrastructure will fundamentally transform our understanding of the first great age of print. It is, therefore, timely, that we begin to address one of the most inconvenient of truths – the issue of lost books. This article focuses on publishing in French as a case study. This is a particularly fertile avenue of investigation because of the existence of two exceptional sources – short title catalogues of French books published in the 1580s. By mapping the entries in these sources to the most recent short title catalogue of French print published in 2007, we can begin to explore the extent and character of the survival and loss of vernacular print in this period.

Introduction

Our knowledge of the history of the book in Europe from its beginnings in 1450 until the end of the sixteenth century has reached a formative moment. Within five years, scholars will have at their disposal short title catalogues covering almost all of the print domains of Europe. Such significant advances in research infrastructure will fundamentally transform our

¹ Alexander S. Wilkinson is Director of the Centre for the History of the Media at University College Dublin. Earlier versions of this article were delivered as papers to the Society for the Study of French History Conference held in St Andrews in July 2007 and to the British and Irish Research Seminar at Trinity College, Dublin in October 2007. The author would like to thank in particular Alun Carr, Mark Greengrass, Neil Harris, Philip John, Alexander Marr, Andrew Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby for their questions and comments, all of which have helped shape this article.

understanding of the first great age of print. A fact of some importance, scarcely acknowledged, is the enormous advantage that historians and literary specialists of Britain have enjoyed over those interested in the other major print domains of Europe. Since 1926, anyone wishing to look at the development of the book in England, Scotland and Ireland could turn to Alfred Pollard and Gilbert Redgrave's monumental *English Short Title Catalogue*.² In 1938, spurred on by Pollard and Redgrave's volume, the process of microfilming England's printed heritage began in earnest – a project motivated not only by commercial opportunism but also by a genuine desire to ensure the preservation of rare material and to broaden access to it.³ The short title catalogue itself was revised and expanded significantly in 1976 and 1986. In its most recent incarnation, the English STC has been made available free of charge as an electronic resource,⁴ while the subscription-based *Early English Books Online* offers text-searchable editions of almost all items in the catalogue, accessible across the globe.⁵ There can be little doubt that the English STC and its ancillary initiatives, represent the gold-standard of bibliographical projects.

In stark contrast, scholars of other major European print domains have not had access to any comparable resource. Indeed, it has been an unfortunate characteristic of twentieth-century bibliography that the complex economy of print across Europe has almost exclusively been studied microscopically rather than macroscopically. Individual parts of Europe's printed heritage have been examined often in forensic detail: either with specialist studies of themes or genres (such as medical texts or news books), or the study of a particular author, printer or place of publication. However, there have been few real attempts to bring this rich seam of information together nor to undertake the necessary additional work to compile catalogues of Europe's print domains. The inevitable consequence of an over-reliance on the microscopic approach has been that historians of the book outside of England, Scotland and Ireland have been forced to confront a highly fractured picture of publishing in the early-modern period.

² William Pollard and Gilbert Redgrave, *A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland and Ireland : and of English books published abroad, 1475-1640* (London : Bibliographical Society, 1926). The second edition was begun by W.A. Jackson & F.S. Ferguson and completed by Katharine F. Pantzer. Anti-intuitively, the second volume was published in 1976 while the first volume appeared a decade later in 1986.

³ This was an initiative of Eugene Barnum Power, founder of University Microfilms (now UMI).

⁴ <http://estc.bl.uk/> A recent and very insightful discussion of the ESTC can be found in Stephen Tabor, 'ESTC and the Bibliographical Community' in *The Library*, 7th series, vol 8., no. 4 (December, 2007), pp. 367-386.

⁵ <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>

Over the past decade, however, a truly profound transformation in this research topography has been taking place. By the end of 2012, scholars will have an almost complete map of European print before 1601. The British Library's Incunabula Project, ongoing since 1980, has captured information on some 27,460 out of an anticipated 28,000 extant items printed before 1501.⁶ The domains of Germany and Italy are being covered by the ongoing VD 16⁷ and Edit 16 projects.⁸ For France, a short title catalogue of books published in French before 1601 (hereafter FB) was published in November 2007, containing over 52,000 entries.⁹ The FB Project, carried out over a period of twelve years by an industrious team of scholars based at the University of St. Andrews, undertook a global survey of copies in over 1600 libraries. It also created full bibliographic descriptions based on physical inspection of items. With the French phase complete, the St. Andrews team has now embarked on a project not only to map Latin publishing in France but also those print domains not currently covered by other projects.¹⁰ A partner initiative, meanwhile, has been established at the newly established Centre for the History of the Media at University College Dublin which will produce a catalogue of all books published in Spanish or Portuguese or printed in Spain, Portugal, Mexico or Peru before 1601.¹¹

It is now becoming possible to imagine radically new ways in which research into the history of the book in the period before 1601 might be undertaken. Within just a few years, scholars will have the necessary tools to probe both the contours and poetics of every major print domain. They will also be able to compare cultures of print. It will, for instance, be possible to assess the depth of interest in different themes or categories of print across different domains or to consider the movement of texts across Europe. With a few intriguing exceptions (especially England, Spain and Portugal), it was Latin and not vernacular editions that dominated the presses of Europe in the fifteenth, sixteenth and well into the seventeenth centuries. The Latin book trade was shaped as much around international as national markets. Only

⁶ <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/index.html>

⁷ The VD16 Project holds information on some 100,000 records and can be accessed via http://gateway-bayern.bib-bvb.de/aleph-cgi/bvb_suche?sid=VD16. The project is based on the collections of German libraries only and has excluded single leaf items.

⁸ <http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/> The EDIT 16 Project is an initiative of the Laboratorio per la bibliografia retrospettiva of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico. Currently, it holds data on 60,000 items. The project is based on records from participating Italian libraries; it does not at present offer a global survey of copies.

⁹ Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby and Alexander Wilkinson (eds.), *French Vernacular Books. Books published in the French language before 1601* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2 vols. Hereafter FB.

¹⁰ Further information on the French Vernacular Book and French Latin projects can be found at <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~bookproj/>

¹¹ Further information on the Iberian Book Project is available at <http://www.ucd.ie/ibp/> It is anticipated that a one volume short title catalogue will be published in early 2010 by Brill. A current estimate is that this catalogue will contain around 20,000 items which have survived in over 100,000 copies.

with recent advances in mapping the world of print will scholars be in a position to explore adequately this dominant but under-researched facet of the book trade. It is often said that no two generations write history in the same way; they have different preoccupations and different opportunities. We are now at a liminal moment in the history of the book; one where the frontiers of research are being radically reshaped.

As we begin to turn the page of this new and exciting chapter in the history of the book, it is vitally important that we begin to address one of the most inconvenient of truths.¹² It is the nature of most cataloguing projects whether of the fifteenth century or of the eighteenth century, whether of Ireland or of Italy, that they are based around efforts to record and catalogue copies of books held in public and research libraries and - to a far more limited extent - private collections. But do scholars assume too casually that what is recorded in these catalogues is representative of what was actually published? To what extent has our picture of the world of the early modern book been distorted by the various pressures on survival? These are questions of enormous significance, not least because of the increasing use of bibliometric analyses to establish trends in production and consumption of print.

This article seeks to address these issues by reconstructing the broad contours of the legion of the lost. It will focus specifically on the case of French print before 1601 because of the existence of two exceptional sources – the first ever short title catalogues of French print which appeared in the mid-1580s. By mapping the entries in François de La Croix du Maine's *Premier volume de la bibliothèque* (1584)¹³ and Antoine Du Verdier's *La Bibliothèque* (1585)¹⁴ to the database used to generate the 2007 short title catalogue of books published in French, we can gain a series of valuable insights into the extent and character of the survival and loss of vernacular print in this period.

¹² This issue of lost books is a subject seldom raised by scholars. One notable exception, for the eighteenth century, is the excellent article by Edward Jacobs and Antonia Forster, '« Lost Books » and Publishing History : Two Annotated Lists of Imprints for the Fiction Titles Listed in the Circulating Library Catalogs of Thomas Lowndes (1766) and M. Heavisides (1790) of which no known copies survive' in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, v.89, no. 3 (September 1995), pp. 260-297.

¹³ François de La Croix du Maine, *Premier volume de la bibliothèque* (Paris : chez Abel L'Angelier, 1584), 2o. FB 31761

¹⁴ Antoine Du Verdier, *La bibliothèque* (Lyon : Jean d'Ogerolles pour Barthélemy Honorat et Thibaud Ancelin, 1585), 2o. FB 17852.

The French short title catalogues offer perhaps our most important opportunity for a case study of lost vernacular print in Europe. The *Bibliothèques* were not the first national vernacular bibliographies. That honour belongs to Anton Francesco Doni and his *Libreria*, published in Venice in 1550. The *Libreria* surveyed books written in Italian or translated into Italian.¹⁵ Nevertheless, analysis of the *Libreria* for rates of loss will need to be deferred until the completion of the Edit 16 project. It is also the case that the *Libreria* is relatively short. La Croix du Maine's *Bibliothèque* is around 638 pages in length, while the catalogue of Du Verdier comes in at a staggering 1264 pages. In contrast, Doni's *Libreria* contains a meagre 144 pages. The quest for a source base which would yield an adequate sample was also the reason why booksellers' records or inventories of printer's stocks were not employed.¹⁶ Inventories also tend to have the frustrating characteristic of listing entries which are highly abridged, with very short titles and incomplete or missing publication information.

In short, the French catalogues of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier offer one of our best opportunities to explore the question of lost vernacular print in Europe. But before we move onto consider the results of the process of mapping the entries in these catalogues to FB, it would be worthwhile to gain a sense of these works as sources – a sense of their character, scope and, of course, their reliability.

The Bibliothèques: The Catalogues and their authors

The first ever French Short Title Catalogue – printed in 1584 - was the work of François Grudé, sieur de La Croix du Maine. It was entitled the *Premier volume de la bibliothèque* and published by one of the major figures of the

¹⁵ Anton Francesco Doni, *Libreria, nella quale sono scritti tutti gl'autori vulgari con cento discorsi sopra quelli. Tutte le tradutioni fatte al altre lingue, nella nostra & una tavola generalmente come si costuma fra librari* (Vinegia : apresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1550). The following year, Doni produced a second catalogue of books, this time covering manuscripts he had seen but which were not yet published. Both volumes were later combined and published in 1557 in octavo, again printed by Giolito de Ferrari.

¹⁶ Some examples of inventories include that of Estienne Thoulouze. On this, see Françoise Giteau, 'Inventaire du librarie Etienne Thoulouze', in *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Bordeaux*, 61 (1962), pp. 47-82. For the inventory of Vincent Réal, see Francis Higman with Yann Morvant and Marc Vial 'A bookseller's world: the 'inventaire' of Vincent Réal' in Andrew Pettegree, Paul Nelles and Philip Conner, *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 304-318. For an excellent edited inventory of a Spanish bookseller, see William Pettas, *A Sixteenth-Century Spanish Bookstore: The Inventory of Juan de Junta* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995).

Parisian printing industry, Abel l'Angelier (c. 1550-1610).¹⁷ Very little is known of the life of La Croix du Maine. We know that he was born around 1552 in Sablé in Maine, that he was around 22 when he first began work on the French catalogue, and 32 when it was finally published.¹⁸ A young, driven and ambitious scholar, he was not afraid of a little self-promotion. In 1583, a year before his catalogue was to appear, La Croix du Maine brought out a pamphlet entitled *Desseins ou projects pour dresser une bibliothèque parfaite & accomplie de tous poincts* which he addressed directly to the French king, Henri III.¹⁹ Pamphlets in France were almost invariably published in octavo, but the short *Desseins* was printed in quarto. This distinctive pamphlet was, in effect, advance publicity for the forthcoming short title catalogue. Certainly, the *Bibliothèque* was an expensive undertaking requiring considerable capital investment; the publisher needed the work to sell well. In the publicity pamphlet, La Croix du Maine admits that he can understand why anyone would be sceptical at his claims to be so close to producing such a comprehensive catalogue of French works – not least because of the sheer number of texts in circulation. Lest there be any doubt about his accomplishments, he invites the king to appoint a member of the court to come round and visit his files.²⁰

The *Desseins* was intended to stimulate interest in the forthcoming *Bibliothèque*. But it was also intended as a genuine appeal for royal patronage which La Croix du Maine required to support future projects. For now that his French short title catalogue was on the brink of publication, La Croix du Maine set out ambitious plans for the creation of a physical library of 10,000 volumes, to be housed in 100 cabinets.²¹ He intended that these 100 cabinets be arranged in seven subject classifications – sacred things, the arts and sciences, the description of the universe, the human being, famous

¹⁷ On the life and publishing output of Abel L'Angelier, see Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin, *Abel L'Angelier et Françoise de Louvain (1574–1620). Suivi du Catalogue des ouvrages publiés par Abel L'Angelier (1574–1610) et la Veuve L'Angelier (1610–1620)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

¹⁸ Rigoley de Juvigny (ed.), *Les bibliothèques françaises de La Croix du Maine et de Du Verdier sieur du Vauprivas*, Nouvelle édition (Paris, 1772), vol. 1, b2r-b3v. Rigoley de Juvigny carried forward the research of Bernard de La Monnoye intended to revive the Bibliothèques of Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine.

¹⁹ François de La Croix du Maine, *Desseins ou projects pour dresser une bibliothèque parfaite & accomplie de tous poincts* (Paris, s.n., 1583), 4o, ff. [14]. FB 31760. Only two copies of this pamphlet are known to exist – there is a copy in the Bibliothèque de la Mazarine in Paris, Rés. 10245 (2) and in Leuven Katholieke Universiteit, Centrale Bibliotheek 3 A 19525. The *Desseins* were reprinted towards the end of La Croix du Maine's *Bibliothèque*, Vv2r-Xx3v. Very speculatively, it is possible that La Croix du Maine may have been seeking a post in the royal library, then under the direction of Jacques Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre. The royal collection at Fontainebleau moved to Paris under Charles IX. On this library, see Frank Hamel, 'The Librarians of the royal library at Fontainebleau' in *The Library*, series 3, no.1 (1910), pp. 190-199.

²⁰ La Croix du Maine, *Desseins*, A7v.

²¹ La Croix du Maine, *Desseins*, A6r.

men of war, the works of God and *memoires*. He did not, however, stop there. For the plan to create such a magnificent library was only one of three projects La Croix du Maine had conceived. In his preface to his *Premier volume de la Bibliothèque*, La Croix du Maine also set out his plans for the second and third volumes which were to be a subject bibliography and a bibliography of Latin authors.

La Croix du Maine had good reason to expect that there might be a real opportunity to secure funding from the French king. Certainly, he had managed to persuade a major Parisian publisher – Abel L'Angelier – to back his French catalogue. The catalogue, when it appeared in 1584, also included a number of celebrity endorsements from leading literary figures in France.²² Moreover, opportunities for funding seemed ripe. Henri III attempted to emulate his grandfather François I in his patronage of the arts. While Henri did not spend as vastly on great architectural projects, he did spend huge amounts on major cultural initiatives and on smaller endeavours.²³ It is no coincidence that the number of printed books dedicated to the king soared during Henri's reign.²⁴ And yet, for all that, La Croix du Maine was never to receive the research funding he sought. No evidence has survived to explain why this should have been the case, although we might be tempted to speculate. Perhaps the King was reluctant to offer patronage to someone of La Croix du Maine's comparatively low social standing?²⁵ Perhaps there was some hint of Protestant sympathies?²⁶ Perhaps, Henri III was simply put off by du Maine's bald ambition? Or perhaps Henri III felt that La Croix du Maine's three-part research proposal was simply too expensive or too unrealistic?

The second ever STC of French books appeared within just a few months of La Croix du Maine's catalogue. Entitled *La Bibliothèque*, it was compiled by Antoine Du Verdier, sieur de Vauprivas (1544-1600). Du Verdier was a prominent figure in Lyon society. In his 40s at the time his catalogue was

²² Celebrities included Joannes Auratus, the Latin name for Jean Dorat (1508-1588), a leading member of La Pléiade. La Croix du Maine, *Premier volume de la bibliothèque*, Aaa1r.

²³ Patronage during the reigns of Charles IX, Henri III and Henri IV is an area that deserves more serious scholarly investigation. An interesting beginning has been made by R. J. Knecht, 'Royal Patronage of the Arts in France, 1574-1610' in Keith Cameron (ed.), *From Valois to Bourbon: dynasty, state and society in early modern France* (Exeter : University of Exeter, 1989), pp. 145-160.

²⁴ FB indicates that there are approximately 415 works dedicated to Henri III; this compares to 280 dedicated to François I.

²⁵ Claude Longeon comments on La Croix du Maine's social elevation in his article 'Antoine Du Verdier et François de La Croix du Maine' in *Actes du Colloque Renaissance-Classicisme du Maine. Le Mans 1971* (Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1975), pp. 213-233. Longeon's analysis characterises the work of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier in terms of their intellectual 'médiocrité', which seems unduly critical.

²⁶ See Juvigny, *Les bibliothèques françaises*, b2r-b3v.

published, Du Verdier had been a page to the Cardinal du Bellay whom he had followed to Rome, before buying the post of *contrôleur général des finances* in Lyon.²⁷ He had also been responsible for a number of other works in French and Latin, as an author, editor and translator.²⁸ His *Bibliothèque*, published in December 1584 although carrying a date of 1585 on the title-page, was produced by a consortium of printers in Lyon who had joined forces to finance the edition.²⁹ We should not forget how expensive large folio editions were to produce and just how anxious Du Verdier's publishers might have been in 1584 having been beaten to the presses by just a few months by La Croix du Maine. Their decision to proceed with publication despite the appearance of the rival volume was probably based on inertia but also, perhaps, the recognition of the fundamental differences in character between the two catalogues.

Intellectually, it is of course startling that two scholars should have arrived simultaneously at the idea of producing a catalogue of French books without having known, until the very last minute, of the work of the other. Nonetheless, the projects do appear to have been carried out independently. The number of overlapping items is very small with just under 14% of items appearing in both catalogues. The character of the two volumes is also very distinctive. La Croix du Maine's catalogue, after his various pleas for research funding, presents a list of all authors in French stretching back centuries. Du Verdier, meanwhile, confined himself to more recent authors and largely to printed items rather than manuscripts, including more substantial biographies of authors and descriptions of their major works. The two bibliographers themselves were at great pains to point out that their projects were independent endeavours and that they had not had any contact with each other. La Croix du Maine stressed the geographical distance that separated the two of them – with Du Verdier based in Lyon while he was based 100 leagues away.³⁰ Du Verdier related the example of two brothers, brought up together in the same household, with the same moral and intellectual education. Should these brothers write on the same subject, he observed, they would most surely produce two very different books'.³¹

²⁷ There is a biographical entry for Du Verdier in La Croix du Maine, *La premier volume de la bibliotheque*, B5v. See also Claude Odon Reure, *Le Bibliographe Antoine Du Verdier* (Paris : Picard, 1897).

²⁸ FB 8999-9001, 17836-17860, 37822, 37828, 37832, 37834, 45928, 46969 and 48786.

²⁹ Jean d'Ogerolles. Barthélemy Honorat and Thibaud Ancelin.

³⁰ La Croix du Maine, *La premier volume de la bibliotheque*, ã6r

³¹ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, *2r.

In all, it took both authors around ten years to compile their information and publish their catalogues. As far as it is possible to reconstruct their research methodology, it seems that the bibliographers relied on their personal collections of items which were extensive.³² They visited other private collections and communicated with a range of scholars from across Europe.³³ They also gathered information from the inventories of printers and booksellers, including items which were forthcoming.³⁴ The location of both authors undoubtedly had an impact on the range of materials they catalogued, with La Croix du Maine based in Paris and Du Verdier in Lyon. 64% of items recorded by La Croix du Maine were published in Paris, while 13% were published in the second great printing centre of France, Lyon. While 53% of items in Du Verdier's *Bibliothèque* were also published in Paris, a far higher proportion, 26%, were published in Lyon. The fruits of all their various searches were distilled onto separate manuscript sheets, arranged alphabetically by author or translator. In his advance publicity pamphlet, La Croix du Maine mentioned that he had spent six hours a day on the project since he began work in 1569. Three hours were spent researching and three writing; he indicated that was able to produce three sheets per day and a thousand sheets per year.³⁵ Du Verdier clearly did not keep any working copies, since he lamented in his work that the printer had lost the sheets which contained the references to books by Robert Estienne, Robert Cibolle and Robert Cenalis.³⁶

The prefaces to both bibliographies offer explanations for what had prompted such considerable undertakings. One overwhelming objective was the desire to demonstrate the sheer range of works available in the French language. Although Latin was to remain the *lingua franca* of Europe and dominant language of intellectual discourse well into the seventeenth century, there was a growing sense of pride in the use of French as a valid vehicle for scholarly communication. French was, they argued, an appropriate language for the full range of intellectual endeavours covering subjects such as literature, philosophy, theology and history. Their confidence and pride in French even ran to suggesting that it would be useful both as a vehicular as well as a vernacular language. There was a sense that it would be unwise for scholars across Europe to ignore the growing corpus of works that was being composed in and translated into French.

³² We do not know what became of their collections.

³³ La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier were part of a tradition of great research initiative of the time, many of which relied on international collaboration. One of the most celebrated of these projects, has recently been the subject of a first-rate monographic study, see Matthew McLean *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Munster. Describing the World in the Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

³⁴ La Croix du Maine, *La premier volume de la bibliotheque*, ã6r.

³⁵ Ibid, ã6r-ã7v.

³⁶ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, LL14r. He anticipated that these missing entries would appear in a second edition of the *Bibliothèque*; this was never to materialise.

The need to reflect fully the importance of the vernacular intersected with a desire to record and make sense of what appeared to their authors to be a great torrent of publications. There was a desire to bring order to seeming chaos, to address an anxiety over ‘information overload’. This form of anxiety, and indeed the solution advanced to remedy it, was not peculiar to the early-modern mind. Vincent de Beauvais, in the prologue to his four-volume *Speculum maius* (1255) remarked that,

Since the multitude of books, the shortness of time and the slipperiness of memory do not allow all things which are written to be equally retained in the mind, I decided to reduce in one volume in a compendium and in summary order some flowers selected from all the authors I was able to read.³⁷

With so many works pouring from the French presses, a core purpose of these catalogues was to demonstrate the richness of the French language and to demonstrate that Europe’s intellectual centre of gravity had now shifted from Italy to France. But the catalogues also aimed to provide an ordered, practical research tool by which scholars in France and in Europe could identify what was available on particular subjects.

The projects of these bibliographical pioneers were innovative in that this was the first time that anyone had attempted a French STC. However, in their methodology Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine were directly emulating projects that had appeared as early as forty years before – most especially Conrad Gesner’s *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545)³⁸ and its major supplement the *Pandectarum*³⁹ which together recorded around 15,000 works in Latin, Greek and Hebrew written by some 3,000 authors. They also looked

³⁷ Vincent de Beauvais, *Bibliotheca mundi* (Douai, 1624), I *Speculum naturale*, Prologue 1, cited in Ann Blair, Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload, ca. 1550-1700, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 64, no. 1 (Jan., 2003), pp. 14.

³⁸ Conrad Gesner, *Bibliotheca universalis sive catalogus omnium scriptorium locupletissimus, in tribus linguis, Latina, Graeca, et Hebraica* (Tiguri : apud Christophorum Froschoverum, 1545), 2o. Du Verdier’s *Bibliothèque* has a supplement which is present in most but not all copies, signed A-F6 (F6 blank); it contains additions to ‘la bibliothèque de Gesner’.

³⁹ Conrad Gesner *Pandectarum sive Partitionum universalium* (Tiguri: Excudebat Christophorus Froschoverus, 1548), 2o.

to Anton Francesco Doni's *Libraria*, the first bibliography of vernacular print.

As with Gesner and Doni, the French bibliographers placed great stress on the idea of universality in terms of what items should be incorporated.⁴⁰ But there was a clear disjunction between the vision and reality of a universal catalogue. The stated scope of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier was that their catalogues should be as inclusive as possible. Their authors made a great deal of the fact that they refrained from making qualitative judgements on grounds of taste as to whether or not to include a particular book. Works in French regardless of place of publication were included. Protestant works as well as Catholic works fell within their remit, although La Croix du Maine is more circumspect about including this material than Du Verdier. Even the latter, however, took great care to indicate whether a particular work has been censured in the margin. Du Verdier wrote that in wanting his catalogue to be as universal as possible, 'he was indifferent to good and bad authors, to the knowledgeable and ignorant, to the sacred and the profane'.⁴¹ As evidence of his firm belief in universality, he tells us that he has even included the works of François Rabelais - a 'mockers of God and of the world'.⁴²

This concept of universality did, however, have its bounds. Gesner's *Bibliotheca Universalis* limited itself only to works in Greek, Hebrew and Latin – only those works of fitting intellectual credentials. Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine included only those books that they, and probably many of their contemporaries, considered to be important. Therefore, that broad category of ephemeral works that has increasingly come to interest scholars of early-modern Europe lay largely outside their field of interest. Excluded or passed over in a few lines, therefore, were the majority of short political pamphlets, royal edicts, educational literature, almanachs and prognostications. This sense of the scope of the first French catalogues will be important to our discussion of the survival and loss of French texts.

⁴⁰ On this vision of a universal library, see Roger Chartier, 'Libraries without walls' in *Representations*, no. 42 (Spring, 2003), pp. 38-52. Included in Professor Chartier's article is a masterful discussion of the *Bibliothèques* of Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine.

⁴¹ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, L6v. This echoes an earlier passage found at g4v 'Ce n'est pas pour priser mes escrits, que je m'enregistre icy. Mais ayant projecté de faire une Bibliothèque Française, la plus universelle que je pourray, & d'y mettre indifferemment bons & mauuais auteurs, à fin que les uns reçoivent luster des autres: puis que je me suis meslé de barbouiller le papier, & que mon nom vient en son reng: bien que je n'aye fait oeuvres de valeur & merite, icelles neantmoins seront cy dessous, inserees'.

⁴² Entry for François Rabelais (circa 1490-1553), Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, L6v, p. 408.

Before we leave the subject of the intention and character of these catalogues, it is important to look at one final characteristic. This is the acute sense of the fragility of history revealed in the prefaces to the bibliographies. The recovery of ancient texts was, of course, very much at the beating heart of the intellectual movement of the Renaissance. However, the rediscovery of lost texts also shaped perceptions of the transience of human affairs, at least for Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine. There are numerous references throughout the preliminary introductions of both catalogues to the destruction of the Library at Alexandria, for example, or to the number of major works by classical authors that have been completely lost. Referring, for instance, to Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Du Verdier notes with some anxiety that Aristotle wrote many more books than have survived.⁴³ Leading on from this observation, there was a very sharp sense of trepidation that the same fate might befall the authors of his period. To some extent, then, the first French catalogues, were an attempt to preserve for posterity the intellectual accomplishments of what was regarded as the golden age of France.

The Catalogues as Sample

Having explored the scope and character of these two late sixteenth century French catalogues, let us turn now to the issue of survival and loss. How many of the titles recorded by Du Verdier and La Croix du Maine have survived the taste of collectors, librarians, the ravages of time, revolution and war? In order to answer this question, an inventory of all printed items recorded in these catalogues was compiled. When this process was complete, the inventory amounted to around 5,639 usable references after discounting duplicate entries within each catalogue and overlapping items between the catalogues. 5,639 items represents a very significant sample of pre-1585 editions, around 15% of known items. These references were then correlated against the database of the French Book Project used to generate the 2007 short title catalogue of French books (FB).

⁴³ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, preface.

A L 21

Un liure d'Alcinous de la doctrine de Platon, a esté traduit en François sous le nom d'une Damoiselle, & m'a l'on assuré qu'il a esté imprimé à Paris, toutes-fois ie ne l'ay point encores veu.

A L C M A N Poëte Lyrique Grec.
Les sentences de ce Poëte sont traduites en François, & imprimées au volume, intitulé Les sentences illustres des Poëtes Lyriques, Comiques, & autres Grecs & Latins. Ensemble les vies d'iceux, mises en François par G. L. D. T. [Impr. à Paris 16. Par Michel Iulian 1580.]

A L C V I N precepteur de l'Empereur Charlemagne, a escrit vn liure de vers moraux en Latin non mesurez par pieds, comme sont ceux des Poëtes Latins: mais rimez à la François. Et combien qu'il ne soit en François, neantmoins parce qu'il est ancien & rare, ie n'en ay veu qu'un, escrit en main en la libranie du feuticui de Milliau, de la Maison d'Aligre, ie l'ay bien voulu mettre en ceste Bibliothèque.

A L I M A N L A Y Q L L E Musicien & Organiste à Lyon, a mis en musique à quatre parties, Chansons & voix de ville. A Lyon par Simon Gorlier 1561.

A L I X A N D R E A P H R O D I S E E.
Problemes. Voyez Mathurin Heret.

A L E X A N D R E D Y O N I S E, maistre chirurgien & barbier à Vendoline, a escrit,
Traicté & responce sur la question proposée par d'Angaron & Martel, chirurgiens du Roy de Nauarre & decidée par Laurens Ioubert, docteur en médecine. Allouer si avec la seule caue froide & simple on peut guerir tant les playes des harquebusades qu'autres. [Impr. à Paris 8°. par Jean Parent 1585.]

A L E X A N D R E G V I B E R T Esleu pour le Roy à Orleans, a escrit,
Traicté familier pour toiser, mesurer, & exactement calculer toute maçonnerie, tant en carré & superficie, que cube & massue, comme aussi les plattes formes turcies & leuées de riuieres, fosses & vuydanges de terres. [Impr. à Paris 8°. par Charles Macé 1580.]

A L E X A N D R E D E P A R I S. Voyez Lambert Li Cors.

A L E X A N D R E P I C C O L O M I N J. Voyez Jacques Goupil, Pierre de la Rivey. A S. André.

A L E X A N D R E D E L A T O V R R E T E President des Généraux des monnoyes de France, a escrit,
Discours des admirables vertus de l'or potable, auquel sont traictés les principaux fondemens de la médecine, l'origine & cause de toutes maladies, & quels sont les medicamens plus propres à leur guerison, & à la conseruation de la santé humaine, avec vne apologie de la tres-vtile science d'alchimie tant cōtre ceux qui le blasment que aussi cōtre les faulxaires, larrōs & trōpeurs, qui en abusent. [Impr. à Lyon 8°. par Pierre Roussin, & depuis à Paris par Jean de l'Astre 1579. Jacques Gohory a escrit contre ce discours, comme vous pourrez voir au catalogue de ses œuvres.]

A L E X A N D R E T R A L L I A N. Voyez Sebastien Colin.

b 5 ALEX

Figure 1 A page of entries from Antoine Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque* (Lyon, Jean d'Ogerolles pour Barthélemy Honorat et Thibaud Ancelin, 1585), 2o. b5r, p. 21. Image courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

It was important that considerable sensitivity be employed during the process of correlating the entries contained in the La Croix du Maine and Du

Verdier inventory against the FB database. Even before the process of correlation began, very incomplete or vague entries in the inventory were eliminated. Entries such as ‘François Le Picard a escrit plusieurs sermons imprimez à Paris’⁴⁴ or ‘Ordonnances des Roys de France (imprimees diverses fois & en divers lieux du royaume)’ were excluded from consideration⁴⁵. Thereafter, the majority of the correlation process was relatively straightforward, if time consuming. If a work was cited without or with incomplete publication information, it was mapped to its most likely entry in FB. For instance, La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier sometimes noted two editions or issues as part of a single entry, such as ‘Adrian du Hecquet, Les enseignements des parroisses...Impr. à Louvain [sic], & depuis à Lyon 16, par Benoist Rigaud, 1574’.⁴⁶ It is not entirely clear from this whether the Louvain edition is printed in 1574 or not; no printer or format information is given either. In these instances, the item was mapped to the most probable record in FB. Items with no probable match on the first trawl through the inventory were then subjected to an exhaustive searching process. Attention was paid to different orthographical practices and different ways of rendering titles. Nevertheless, it was often not enough to compare entries against short titles. Probable matches also had to be identified through searches of full title page transcriptions – information contained in the FB database.

It very quickly became apparent that different tolerance levels would need to be set for the two catalogues. La Croix du Maine was the far weaker of the two bibliographers and so his entries were handled with a particularly sceptical eye. Most frustrating, for instance, was his editorial practice of citing books within books as distinct items.⁴⁷ In contrast, Du Verdier was the stronger of the two bibliographers and produced very reliable entries, including accurate format information. Fortunately, he was also the more productive of the two scholars. Clearly not limiting himself to the six hours of work a day claimed by La Croix du Maine or employing more efficient time

⁴⁴ La Croix du Maine, *La premier volume de la bibliothèque*, I3v-I4r.

⁴⁵ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, KK1r

⁴⁶ Du Verdier, *La Bibliothèque*, b1v. The Louvain edition of Adrian Du Hecquet’s *Les enseignements des paroisses* is FB 17249 and the Lyon edition FB 17250

⁴⁷ For instance, La Croix du Maine’s entry ‘Responce aux lettres & questions d’un Calviniste (Paris, Sebastien Nivelles, 1579), in, *La premier volume de la bibliothèque*, H6v is in fact part of the following work DIVINS || OPVSCVLES || ET EXERCICES SPIRITVELS, || DV TRES-SAINT PERE EFREM, || Archediacre d Edesse en Mesopotamie : écrits par || ledit Autheur l’an trois cens cinquante , en lan- || gue Syriaque : & en mesme temps tournez en Grec: || puis en Latin par plusieurs auteurs : maintenant || mis en nostre langue Française. || Avec vn excellent Sermon de S. Cyrille Alexandrin, de l’issue || & sortie de l’Ame hors le corps humain.Plus, vne Responce || aux lettres & questions d’un Caluiniste,touchât l’Innocence, || Virginité , Excellence & Inuocation de la glorieuse Vierge || Marie, Mere de Dieu. || Dedié à vertueuse & excellente Princesse MADAME || DE BOVRBON, Abbessede nostre Dame à Soissons. || Par F François FEV-ARDENT, de l’ordre de S. François, || Docteur en Theologie en l’Vniuersité de Paris. || [Printer’s device] || A PARIS, || Chez Sebastien Niuelle, rue S. Iacques, || à l’enseigne des Cicognes. || [-] || 1579. || AVEC PRIVILEGE. FB 18260.

management practices, Du Verdier published 79% more entries - 4,300 items in total - compared with the 2,400 items recorded by his rival.

Results of the Mapping Process

Classification	Total	LossNo	SurvivingNo	Surviving%	Lost%
Heraldic Works	19	1	18	95	5
Netherlands	16	1	15	94	6
Drama	64	6	58	91	9
Architecture	19	2	17	89	11
Military handbooks	40	6	34	85	15
Economics	31	5	26	84	16
Linguistic	17	3	14	82	18
Poetry (including Emblem books)	535	105	430	80	20
Agriculture, viticulture, texts on hunting, veterinary science	71	15	56	79	21
Medical Texts	288	61	227	79	21
Jurisprudence, including edicts	233	54	179	77	23
Dictionaries	22	5	17	77	23
Classical Authors	335	81	254	76	24
Discourses on government & political theory	107	27	80	75	25
Cookery	4	1	3	75	25
History and Chronicles	456	115	341	75	25
Science and mathematics	113	31	82	73	27

Classification	Total	LossNo	SurvivingNo	Surviving%	Lost%
Newsbooks	74	24	50	68	32
Astrology and cosmography	86	28	58	67	33
Travel, topography, maps and navigational manuals	105	35	70	67	33
Philosophy and Morality	243	86	157	65	35
French political tracts	323	114	209	65	35
Religious	1627	590	1037	64	36
Educational Books (ABCs, how to write letters, grammars)	90	34	56	62	38
Games and recreations (texts on chess, tennis, card games)	16	6	10	62	38
Bibles (including parts)	62	24	38	61	39
Music	86	37	49	57	43
Literature	487	218	269	55	45
Calendars, Almanacs & Prognostications	70	41	29	41	59

Table 1 Results of mapping the entries in the Bibliothèques of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier against FB, ordered by rate of survival.

The table above offers a breakdown by category of the entries contained in the *Bibliothèques* of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier. The figures in the total column give a clear indication of the scope of the catalogues. There is an obvious emphasis on works considered to be of intellectual merit: for example, works on religion, literature, histories and chronicles, and

translations of classical authors. Notable by their absence are works of ephemeral vernacular literature. The great wave of pamphlet literature that was such a prevalent feature of the print culture of the French Wars of Religion is scarcely represented. Other works of ephemera which played a not insubstantial role in the economy of the early book trade (such as ABCs, grammars and broadsheets) are also grossly under-represented in this sample.

Taken together, however, the results of this analysis are both important and arresting. Based on the La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier sample of works, we see an average rate of loss of around 31%. In short, just under one out of every three books has no surviving copy.

For the purposes of our analysis, it is probably fair to infer that anything under the average loss rate of 31% has a statistically high survival rate and anything over this rate has a statistically low rate of survival. In some respects, the results expressed in this table were not unexpected; they quantify what we might already have anticipated. We might, for instance, have expected a high rate of loss for those ephemeral works which are recorded in the *Bibliothèques* such as calendars, almanacs and prognostications. Indeed, given that the catalogues tend to record only significant editions within this genre, it is likely that 59% underestimates significantly the extent of loss. Music books also have a high attrition rate at around 43%. Often music books were published in parts, normally superius, contratenor, tenor and bassus. Surviving sets are quite rare; it is far more common to find that only one or two of the parts have survived. Used by music professionals and sophisticated amateurs, these part books would have been used intensively but infrequently.⁴⁸ The inventory sample for Bibles and games is rather small. However, it is clear that while Bibles were often valued items, they also were subject to repeated use and, of course, were replaced easily. It is unlikely that books of games would have been highly prized; once a game was learned, the value of the book diminished greatly. On the other end of the scale, we not be overly shocked to find heraldic works and architectural books. After all, these texts are often fairly lavishly illustrated and therefore expensive and highly valued. We also find medical works. Again, these texts were often illustrated and have remained highly sought after given their often sensational content dealing with subjects such as battle wounds, venereal disease and cures for the plague.

⁴⁸ On music publishing in the sixteenth century, see Stanley Boorman's learned collection of essays, *Studies in the Printing, Publishing and Performance of Music in the 16th Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

Nevertheless, in other important respects, the results of the mapping exercise are far more startling. We might have anticipated religious works to have had a far higher rate of loss than 36%. It is the case, however, that this category of print benefited enormously from the way in which French municipal libraries evolved in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of these municipal collections were formed as a result of the Revolutionary decree of 1792 which confiscated the property of the French religious houses. Subsequent decrees of 1839 and 1897, moreover, classified the pre-1789 collections as state property which could not be sold or removed without government permission.

Another very surprising and important statistic is the high 45% rate of loss for works of prose literature. It might have been casually assumed that works of literature would continue to have been fairly eagerly sought after through the centuries, particularly of course in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Certainly, French literature usually appears to be well represented in research collections worldwide. Most curiously, perhaps, is the fact that while 45% works of prose literature appear to have been lost, only 20% of works in verse and 9% of dramas suffered the same fate. It is difficult to find satisfying explanations for these divergences simply by looking at the taste of private individuals, collectors and libraries through the ages.

Format	% of Lost Books in Sample	% of Total Items in sample	% of Total Items in FB
2o	6	8	7
4o	18	20	19
8o	45	54	60
12o	1	1	4
16o	30	15	10

Table 2 Formats of lost books. Formats are provided in the La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier catalogues for 4695 items. This table indicates the rate of loss for each format, together with an indication of the overall distribution of formats across the sample. Also included is information from FB, indicating the overall distribution of formats based on 48,317 items where the format is known.

The issue of print runs, though opaque, may have influenced rates of loss. The smaller the print run of an item, the less chance it would have had of survival. However, perhaps the most convincing answer to the curious statistic for prose literature lies not with the type of work itself, or in how many copies it was printed in, but rather with its physical size. When we analyse the inventory of La Croix Maine and Du Verdier by format, some very striking patterns begin to emerge. It is clear that folios and quartos tend to survive well relative to their overall proportion within the sample. Octavos have a much higher statistical chance of survival. They account for around 54% of items in the inventory, but have a loss rate of only around 45%. In terms of our analysis, however, the most interesting variance can be seen with the sextodecimos. 30% of sextodecimos – almost a third - are lost within our sample, but they account for only 15% of editions overall. Books published in sextodecimo have a far higher chance of being lost than books of other formats. Although small, pocket-sized works, sextodecimos were usually quite lengthy. While not intrinsically more fragile than other formats, they did tend to be carried around on journeys making them more prone to damage and loss. It may also be the case that individuals and collectors found the sextodecimos to be less aesthetically pleasing arranged on their bookshelves. People, of course, often keep books for a variety of reasons other than reading them.

To a large extent, then, the curious statistic relating to prose literature might be explained by the significant losses amongst sextodecimo works. It appears that publishers were equally minded to publish works of prose literature in either octavo or in sextodecimo. Works of poetry and drama, however, were published overwhelming in octavo or in quarto; a very small number of such items were ever printed in sextodecimo. In short, the physical size of a work was an important determinant of its chances of survival.

Conclusions and Implications: Reconstructing the Legion of the Lost

The very first catalogues of sixteenth-century French print were bold and ambitious projects. While reminding us of the rich scholarly heritage of this type of research, the *Bibliothèques* also continue to offer a vibrant insight into the world of the book in early-modern Europe. Their authors wanted, perhaps above all, to ensure that the ravages of history protected at least the names and titles of the books circulating in French in their own time. In this, they have been more successful than they could have imagined. All their entries have been incorporated into FB although, where necessary, duly flagged as items with no surviving copy. Indeed, FB has gone way beyond other national cataloguing projects by reconstructing rather than ignoring the problem of lost books – exploiting a variety of different sources and techniques. In addition to these early catalogues of French items, FB has included references from the Frankfurt book fair catalogues, booksellers catalogues such as Brunet's *Manuel de Libraire*,⁴⁹ indices of forbidden books, and evidence gleaned from archival sources. Admittedly such techniques may introduce a small number of 'ghost' references. Nevertheless, false entries probably represent only a tiny proportion of what are almost certainly genuine items which do not survive to the present day. FB is, in many respects, ahead of the field in its attempted reconstruction of such items in part because it has been unusually privileged in the range of information on which it has been able to draw. It is hoped that other national short title catalogue projects might consider following similar processes to FB at some point in the future.⁵⁰

Even with dedicated efforts at piecing together fragments of evidence relating to lost editions and issues, many items have left no trace at all. By treating the *Bibliothèques* of La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier as a sample and comparing their entries against FB, we have at least begun to reconstruct the broader contours of the legion of the lost. The case of French print before 1601 suggests that different categories of print have different rates of survival. Various factors, including the perceived value of editions, the evolving tastes of collectors and libraries, chance, as well as the physical format in which an item was printed, all exerted their influence. Nonetheless, we can establish rough rates of loss for different categories of

⁴⁹ Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres* (Paris : Firmin-Didot, 1860-1865), 6 vols.

⁵⁰ Reconstructing lost books for the English print domain is far less straightforward. A good starting point might be the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London. Also useful might be John Bale's *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptum* (Gippeswici in Anglia [=Wesel] : [D. van der Straten for] Ioannem Ouerton, 1548). This work was rewritten and republished in Basel in 1557.

print which can be employed to recalibrate the bibliometric analyses which are becoming such an important part of book history. Such analyses include, but are not limited to, the use of print statistics as an indirect measure of literacy,⁵¹ their use in assessing comparative levels of print consumption in different regions, or the weight of interest in different genres of literature.

It must be admitted that there are, clearly, barriers to achieving a full sense of what has been lost; indeed this may never be possible. We have little basis, for instance, from which to attempt to reconstruct rates of loss for that large underbelly of printed material which was always intended to be disposable - ephemeral print such as pamphlets and broadsheets. We might safely assume that we have lost at least 31% of such items, but the figure is likely to be far higher. Nevertheless, despite these caveats, there is still much to be gained from confronting rather than ignoring the problem of lost books.

It is important not to be overly pessimistic in our assessments. The figures for rates of loss suggested by our analysis are not as devastating as they might at first appear. Texts may exist in other issues or other editions which have survived the ravages of time. Nonetheless, those of us that use print as a fundamental research tool should begin to acknowledge fully the disparity between what was actually published and what has survived in modern collections. It is important to openly confront this inconvenient truth if we wish to gain a fuller understanding of the complex economy of print in early-modern Europe.

⁵¹ For a sound criticism of the use of publication statistics in this way, see Robert A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 117-118.