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Watermarks and Watersheds: The Dating of MS Riant 80 and the Overlapping Production of Manuscripts and Printed Books

Racha Kirakosian

MANUSCRIPT DATING IS SIGNIFICANT FOR THE TRANSMISSION HISTORY of texts. In some cases, scholarly dating can elucidate details of book production, reception, and dissemination of ideas—for example, how fast and where certain intellectual currents traveled. It can also help us to understand the development of book collections and libraries. Dating, if no explicit date is indicated, can be achieved on the basis of different observations, including images (if present), scribal characteristics, and watermarks, if paper was used.

Watermarks were at the center of the visit of Professor Peter Rückert (Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg) to Harvard University in October 2014. As part of the Houghton Library-Medieval Studies Lectures on Early Book History, his talk “Paper History and Watermarks Research: New Perceptions in Digital Dimensions” gave a full overview of the history and the scholarly use of watermarks. In the workshops following the talk, participants had the opportunity to examine and date medieval German manuscripts and incunabula with the help of Rückert’s expertise, the Houghton Library staff, and the online database *Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem*, which embraces and extends the *Piccard-Online* system and allows the continuous entering of digitalized representations of watermarks together with their metadata, such as motif, dimensions, and manuscripts containing them. There are different ways to obtain a clear image of a watermark, the most common ones being rubbing by applying pressure as means of identifying the more hollow marks of the paper, tracing with the help of a very thin paper on top and a light sheet underneath the mould side of the paper (see figures 5.2A and 5.2B), and photographic reproduction gained with the help of a light sheet to distinguish the paper’s thickness (permeability of light) in different parts (see figure 5.6). Rückert’s workshop prompted me to follow up the material history of MS Riant 80 as this codex is situated at the heart of my research: religious books in medieval Germany (see figure 5.1).

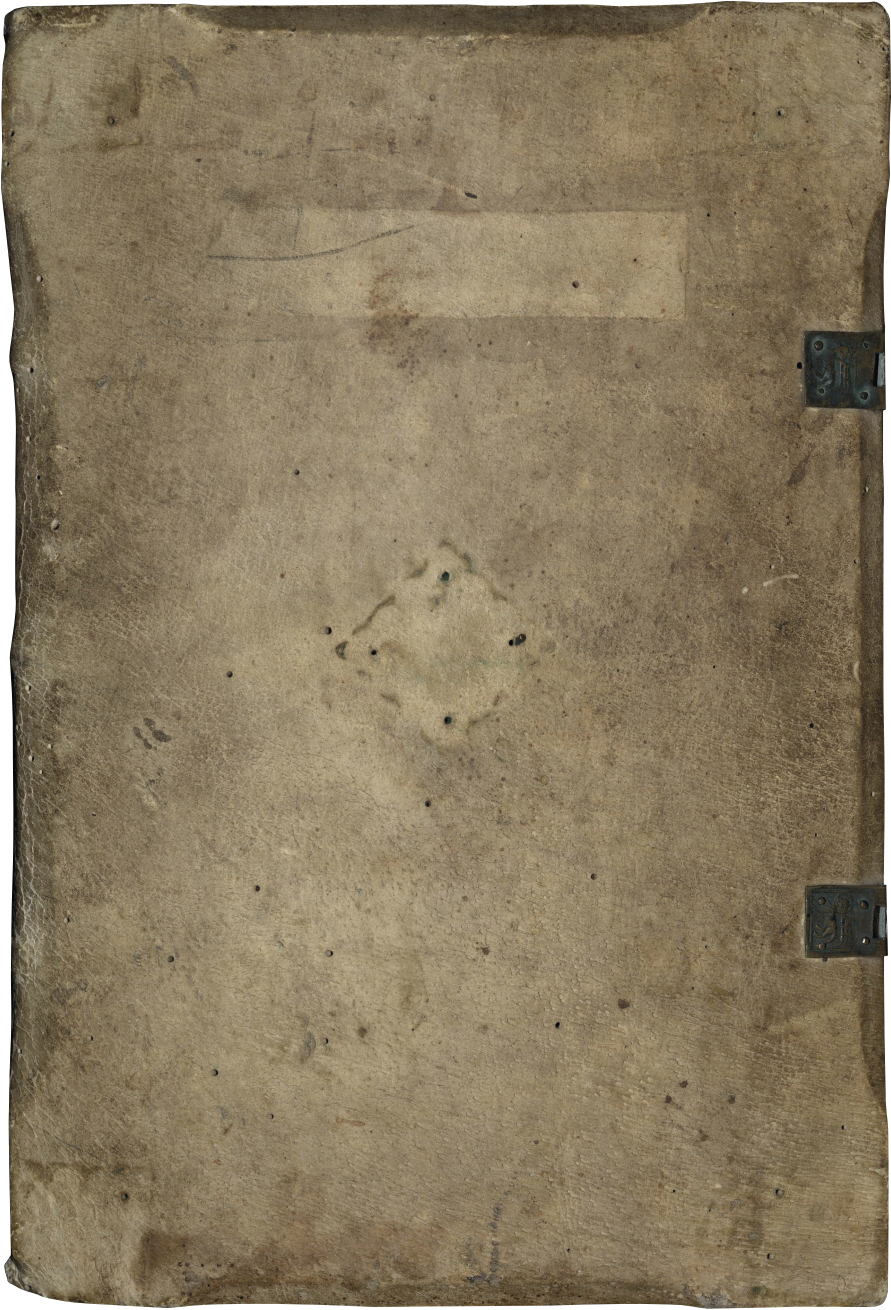


Figure 5.1. Binding of MS Riant 80: pigskin over boards, beveled edges, and decorated catches (clasps, bosses and title label now lost). 32 cm.

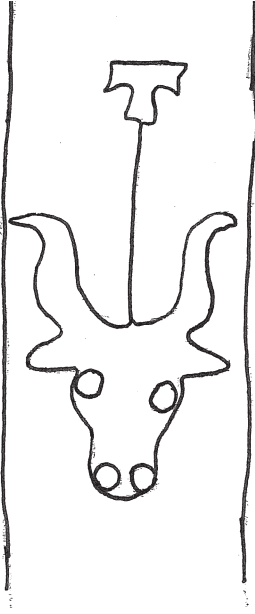


Figure 5.2A. Tracing of watermark on MS Riant 80, fol. 167. Dimensions: || 3.2 cm., width 3.0 cm., height 5.9 cm.

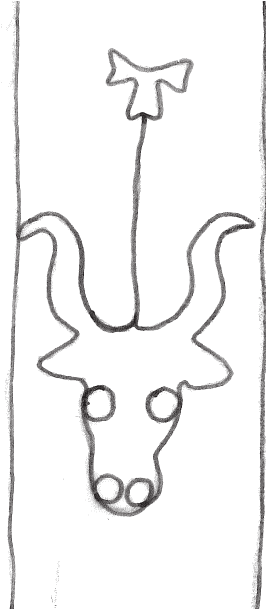


Figure 5.2B. Tracing of watermark on MS Riant 80, fol. 184. Dimensions: || 3.2 cm., width 2.9 cm., height 5.9 cm.

Placing an undated paper manuscript into the appropriate historical context by examining its watermarks can be successful only if an identical—that is, perfectly congruent—watermark is found in another paper, which itself is dated. Maria Stieglecker explains: “In contrast, watermarks that are classified as ‘variants,’ as the term is used today, were clearly made with the same wire figure, but during the production process the shape of the figure changed, creating watermarks that are different from one another.”¹ One specific type of a watermark variant is the so called “twin.” Watermarks often come in such pairs because in the paper production process two screens would be dipped into the same vat in a paper mill (for reasons of efficiency—that is, to use the full capacity of a dipping vat). The two screens would contain the

1 Maria Stieglecker, “Watermarks and their Variants,” in *Bull’s Head and Mermaid: The History of Paper and Watermarks from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period: Booklet and Catalogue of the Exhibition Presented by the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Kommission Für Schrift- und Buchwesen des Mittelalters, Vienna*, eds. Peter Rückert, Sandra Hodeček, Emanuel Wenger, 3rd. enlarged ed. (Stuttgart: Landesarchiv Baden Württemberg, 2009), 37–38 (esp. 37).

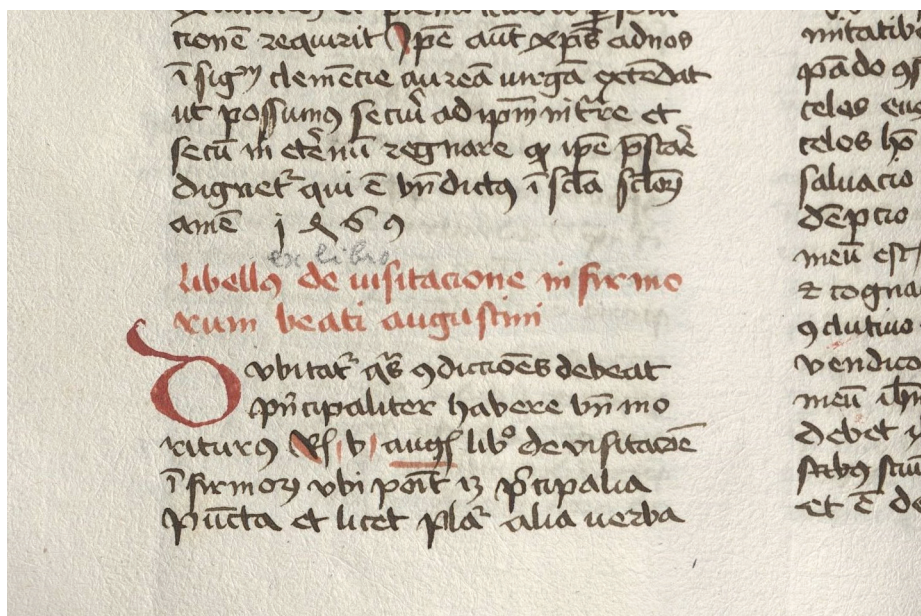


Figure 5.3. Detail of MS Riant 80, fol. 139v.

same motif for their wire figures forming watermarks.² The resulting twin was thus not made with the same wire figure, which is strictly speaking an argument against Stieglecker's definition. However, the differentiation between variants from the same wire figure and a watermark pair verifies that various wire figures were used in a single paper mill. It can also help to estimate the number of vats used in a paper mill and ultimately determine the size of a business, as Carmen Kämmerer outlines.³ From the mid-fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, writing paper was used within three to four years of its production.⁴

2 See Carmen Kämmerer, "The History of Paper and Paper Production," in *Bull's Head and Mermaid*, 12–14 (esp. 13).

3 Ibid., 14.

4 Gerhard Piccard, "Die Wasserzeichenforschung als historische Hilfswissenschaft," *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 52 (1956): 61–115 (esp. 111–112).

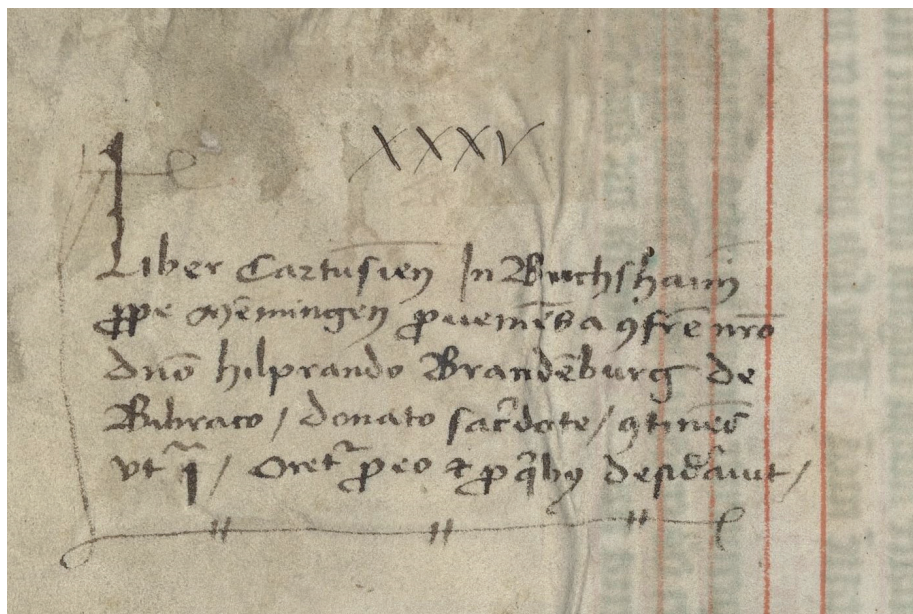


Figure 5.4. Detail of MS Riant 80, front flyleaf.

Houghton Library's MS Riant 80, hitherto roughly dated to the fifteenth century, can now be located into a much more precise timeframe.⁵ This miscellany contains theological works in Latin and was written in a gothic hybrid script by several hands, with colored initials, headings, and paragraph marks in red. The format and paper size is Chancery folio (32 cm). The text is ruled throughout for two columns of forty-five lines. Excluding the frontispiece, all twenty-four quires consist of six bifolios. The first hand to appear returns in a later quire: hand A, fol. 1r–128r, 180r–181v (quires 1–11, 16); hand B, fol. 132r–162v (quires 12–14); and hand C, fol. 192r–268r (quires 17–24). The changes of hands always relate to the distinct quiring; that is, no two hands share a quire. As a consequence some quires contain empty leaves after the conclusion of a text: for example, ten leaves of quire 16 are empty. Quire 15, whose first eight leaves are cut out, appears at first to be totally redundant, but the remaining thin stubs of the cut paper show that these leaves contained writing. These observations lead to the conclusion that the entire collection was written in the same workshop by different scribes who probably copied simultaneously into detached quires that would later be bound together in one codex.

5 The full Harvard Library catalog description online: <<http://id.lib.harvard.edu/aleph/009806958/catalog>> (accessed September 30, 2015).



Figure 5.5A. Johann Mentelin: Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Dimensions: || 3.2 cm., width 3.0 cm., height 5.9 cm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 4Inc2108, fol. 3. <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/?ref=DE0960-4Inc2108_3> (accessed October 5, 2015).



Figure 5.5B. Johann Mentelin: Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Dimensions: || 3.2 cm., width 2.9 cm., height 6.0 cm. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 4Inc2108, fol. 124. : <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE0960-4Inc2108_124> (accessed October 6, 2015).

Another indicator for this procedure is that the codex consists of one coherent paper stock throughout its 287 leaves. The watermark shows a bull's head with a one-lined rod topped by a double-lined St. Antony's cross, which is sometimes referred to as tau since it looks like the Greek letter (see figure 5.2A and its twin mark in figure 5.2B).⁶ This watermark belongs to a specific type of paper used among others in Johann Mentelin's workshop in Strasbourg until 1470. Paper with this particular motif circulated in the mid- and late-1460s in the German-speaking Southwest. This premier quality paper was definitely used in administrative contexts in Basel (see chart at the

6 Identifiable with Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number DE0960-4Inc2108_3 (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 4Inc2108, fol. 3): <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/?ref=DE0960-4Inc2108_3> (accessed October 5, 2015). This watermark motif is close to but not identical to no. 720 (table 28) in Paul Heitz, *Les filigranes des papiers contenus dans les archives de la ville de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1902).

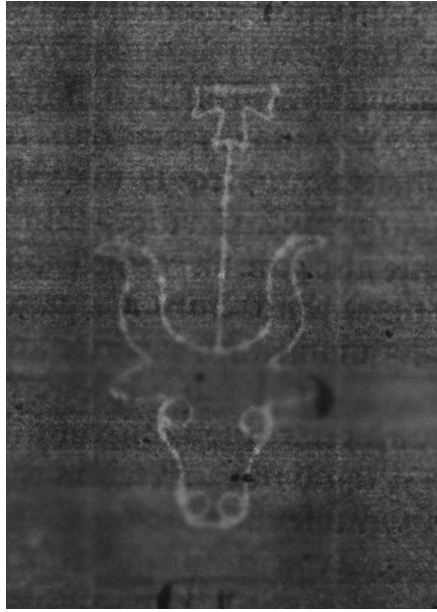


Figure 5.6. Johann Mentelin: Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*. Dimensions: || 3.2 cm., width 3.0 cm., height 5.9 cm. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library: PML 37 (ChL 61a), fol. 5v.

end of this article, nos. 4–7). Briquet was first to attribute the bull’s-head-tau marks to a Gallizian mill at Basel.⁷ More generally, paper with any bull’s heads motif was in high demand since it traditionally signified good quality and durability, having been disseminated since the mid-fourteenth century.⁸ The high quality paper, also used for printing, confirms that MS Riant 80 was produced with much care and diligence, both of which are readily seen in the neat and well-composed copy.

Another observation further narrows down the manuscript’s production to the time between 1469–1470: the copying year 1469 is made explicit at the end of an extract of pseudo-Bonaventura’s *Stimulus amoris* (quire 11, fol. 139v; see figure 5.3).⁹ Since the composition and collation of the codex reveal that the scribes most likely worked

7 See Alan Stevenson, *The Problem of the Missale Speciale*, Bibliographical Society Publication (London: Bibliographical Society, 1967), 128–129.

8 Bull’s heads are particularly dominant watermarks, “seen in Italy as early as 1320, from where they spread to France and Germany,” see Carmen Kämmerer and Peter Rückert, “The World in Watermark,” in *Bull’s Head and Mermaid*, 29–30 (29).

9 See also Baldunius Distelbrink, *Bonaventurae scripta, authentica, dubia vel spuria, critice recensita* (Rome: Istituto storico cappuccini, 1975), no. 21.

simultaneously, this date 1469 can be taken as point of reference for the dating of the entire collection.

The miscellany in question was given to the Carthusians at Buxheim by Hilprand Brandenburg of Biberach (1442–1514), as an inscription on the verso of the parchment front flyleaf specifies (see figure 5.4). Hilprand is here called a brother and a priest-donate (Liber Cartusien. in Buchshaim prope Memmingen, proueniens a confratre nostro domino hilprando Brandenburg de Bibraco, donato sacerdote . . .). Hilprand, who had always kept good relations with the Carthusian order as benefaction documents and lists testify,¹⁰ began his novitiate at the Buxheim Charterhouse around September 8, 1505, and was invested as priest-donate on May 8, 1506.¹¹ A priest-donate was technically a lay brother with less official commitment than a regular monk.¹² There is no doubt that the book received its inscription after Hilprand's investiture and perhaps even after the episcopal approbation for which Hilprand listed the benefactions he had made to the chantry in Biberach.¹³ At his entry, Hilprand generously consigned to the Buxheim Charterhouse vestments, paintings, and most importantly his library. According to the benefaction catalog from 1508, Hildeprand's book gifts eventually totaled "450 books, large and small."¹⁴ We also know that he had previously been a benefactor to Buxheim with a first book gift on April 18, 1479, the first Sunday after Easter.¹⁵ The provenance entry in MS Riant 80 was surely added at a later date than its actual arrival. It is, however, likely that the book came to Buxheim with Hilprand—that is, in 1505—as part of his great library.

The question that needs addressing is, what can the dating of the manuscript and the determination of its provenance from the Southwestern German area contribute to the current state of research, in particular concerning questions about the overlapping production of manuscripts and printed books in the late 15th century? In this case, dating and provenance allow us to contextualize the book within the large library of Hilprand Brandenburg of Biberach on the one hand, and to discuss the transition from

10 Oliver Auge, "Frömmigkeit, Bildung, Bücherliebe—Konstanzen im Leben des Buxheimer Kartäusers Hilprand Brandenburg (1442–1514)," in *Bücher, Bibliotheken und Schriftkultur der Kartäuser: Festgabe zum 65. Geburtstag von Edward Potkowski*, ed. Lorenz Sönke and Edward Potkowski, Contubernium 59 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2002), 399–422 (413).

11 Paul Needham, "The Library of Hilprand Brandenburg," *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft* 29 (1996): 95–125 (97–99); Needham, "Thirteen More Books from the Library of Hilprand Brandenburg," *Einbandforschung* Heft 4 (1999): 23–25.

12 Auge, 414–415.

13 The respective document dates from August 31, 1506; see Needham, "The Library," 98.

14 Auge, 415. See also Friedrich Stöhlker, *Die Kartause Buxheim, 1402–1803*, 4 pts. in 2 vols. (Buxheim: Heimatdienst Buxheim, 1978), 4:844.

15 Needham, "The Library," 96; 98.

manuscripts to incunabula more largely on the other. The fact that Hilprand purchased many books, both manuscripts and early printed books alike, during his student days at Vienna, Pavia, Basel, and thereafter is well attested.¹⁶

Until the period 1469–1470, when he was presumably back in Basel, there is good evidence that Hilprand owned manuscripts, but no evidence for printed books. His dated manuscripts, some or many of which were obviously acquired at second hand, range from 1446 to 1470.¹⁷

Hilprand was a bibliophile in a time when printed books entered the market and he was keen on their acquisition. Today, nearly 160 surviving items of his vast library have been identified,¹⁸ with a clear majority of printed books over manuscripts.¹⁹ During his Basel years (1469–1472), Hilprand dealt among others with the traveling book-agent Johann Meister, “seemingly acting as agent for Johann Mentelin in Strasbourg.”²⁰ Johann Mentelin (1410–1478), Strasbourg’s earliest printer, was the first to publish the Bible in

16 Most recently and in connection with Hilprand’s coat of arms functioning as one of the earliest *ex libris*-stamps: Lilian Armstrong, “Information from Illumination: Three Case-studies of Incunabula in the 1470s,” in *Early Printed Books as Material Objects: Proceedings of the Conference Organized by the IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Munich, 19–21 August 2009*, eds. Bettina Wagner and Marcia Reed, IFLA Publications 149 (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2010), 51–64 (54–55). See also René Wetzels, “Spricht maister Eberhart: Die Unfestigkeit von Autor, Text und Textbausteinen im Cod. Bodmer 59 und in der Überlieferung weiterer mystischer Sammelhandschriften des 15. Jahrhunderts. Mit einem Exkurs zur Buch- und Bibliotheksgeschichte der Kartause Buxheim,” in *Kulturtopographie des deutschsprachigen Südwestens im späteren Mittelalter: Studien und Texte*, eds. Barbara Fleith and René Wetzels, *Kulturtopographie des alemannischen Raums* 1, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 301–325 (319–320). For a color reproduction of the bookplate, see Suzanne Kathleen Karr Schmidt, *Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life* (Chicago, Ill: Art Institute of Chicago, 2011), 46.

17 Needham, “The Library,” 100–101.

18 Armstrong, 52.

19 Needham, “The Library,” 96–97; 100; 125. An addendum note from February 4, 1998, found in the off-print personally given by Paul Needham to the Morgan Library, New York (shelf mark 883 B817 N37), adds a two-volume printing of the 1462 Johann Fust and Peter Schöffer *Biblia Latina* (Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke reference number 4204; hereafter cited as GW, url in note 22), held at the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., to Hilprand of Brandenburg’s surviving library. See also Needham, “The 1462 Bible of Johann Fust and Peter Schöffer (GW 4204): A Survey of its Variants,” *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 81 (2006): 19–49.

20 Needham, “The Library,” 101.

German in 1466.²¹ He used paper from the same stock that we find in MS Riant 80 to print his edition of Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia* (see figures 5.5A, 5.5B, and 5.6 for the watermark of the paper used in this edition).²² It could hitherto only be assumed that Mentelin's Valerius edition was not printed after 1470 with a vague and uncertain inclination towards "not after 15 June 1470."²³ The appearance of its paper stock in a 1469-dated manuscript (MS Riant 80), however, is a good step forward to justifying that date. While the paper mill for this particular stock was probably located in Basel, the exact mill cannot be determined with certainty.²⁴ The general distribution of the watermark's variants shows that it primarily circulated in Southwest Germany. It was used for the production of both printed books and manuscripts in the time span between 1465 and 1470 (see chart at the end of this article).²⁵ As Alan Stevenson explains, "[i]t was simple for the mills at Basel to supply paper to the printers of Strasbourg, for Strasbourg (though on the Ill) is just eighty miles down the Rhine."²⁶ The majority of Hilprand's early printed book acquisitions originated from Strasbourg, with three of the earliest copies coming from Mentelin's printing house.²⁷

Despite the outstanding documentation of Hilprand's library, the information is still imperfect in many details, especially because the dates of many manuscripts remain "not so closely definable."²⁸ Dating those manuscripts helps to understand the transition from manuscript to print in Hilprand's library. By outlining the books chronologically, we can see that MS Riant 80 was one of the younger manuscripts in his collection. It was produced at a turning point in the development of Hilprand's library from the acquisition of manuscripts to the acquisition of printed books. Given that paper would be used within three to four years of its production, its analysis

21 The most extensive reference book on Johann Mentelin remains Karl Schorbach, *Der Straßburger Frühdrucker Johann Mentelin (1458-1478): Studien zu seinem Leben und Werke*, Veröffentlichungen der Gutenberg-Gesellschaft 22 (Mainz: Verlag der Gutenberg-Gesellschaft, 1932).

22 Frederick Richmond Goff, *Incunabula in American Libraries: A Third Census of Fifteenth-century Books Recorded in North American Collections*, 22; ISTC no. iv00022000 at <<http://istc.bl.uk/search/record.html?istc=iv00022000>> (accessed October 3, 2015); GW M49166: <<http://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/docs/M49166.htm>> (accessed October 3, 2015).

23 The dating of Johann Mentelin's edition of Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia* poses a problem that none of the incunabula catalogs responds to adequately. See Victor Scholderer's comment and dating as to "not after 15 June 1470" with a full explanation of the confusion, *The Library*, 4th ser., 20 (1939/40): 48, n. 1.

24 The problems for locating the mill exactly are discussed by Stevenson, 127–151.

25 The only known printed book for this particular watermark is Mentelin's Valerius edition.

26 Stevenson, 140.

27 Auge, 412.

28 Needham, "The Library," 104.

helps to narrow down the parameters of book production processes. Hence, we may conclude that Mentelin's Valerius was printed around the same time as MS Riant 80 was produced. This codicological study of MS Riant 80 illustrates how through the examination of the material composition of manuscripts and incunabula, we may form a broader picture of the Buchkultur during the early years of the printed book.

VARIANTS OF THE WATERMARK OF MS RIANT 80

FOUND IN OTHER MANUSCRIPTS

	Place of conservation	Shelfmark	Date	Contents	Watermark reference no.
1	Cambridge, Houghton Library	MS Riant 80	1469	Theological miscellany	
2	Bonn, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek	S 299	1465–1470	Thomas Aquinas	Picc Dr VII 2297 ²⁹
3	Bonn, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek	S 298,3	1465–1470	Thomas Aquinas	Picc O X 209 ³⁰
4	Basel, Staatsarchiv	Spitalarchiv F 12	1463	Hospital's account book	PO-72512 ³¹
5	Basel, Staatsarchiv	Spitalarchiv F 12	1465		PO-72513 ³²
6	Basel, Staatsarchiv	Spitalarchiv F 12	1465	Hospital's account book	PO-75514 ³³
7	Basel, Staatsarchiv	Politisches F 15	1468	Trial of Barbara von Hungerstein	PO-72516 ³⁴

Provenance for all: Southwest Germany

²⁹ Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number DE1185-S299: <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1185-S299_13>; <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1185-S299_279> (accessed October 5, 2015).

³⁰ Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number DE1185-S298.3: <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1185-S298.3_101>; <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1185-S298.3_156>; <http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=DE1185-S298.3_50> (accessed October 5, 2015).

³¹ Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number CH0780-PO-72512: <<http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=CH0780-PO-72512>> (accessed October 5, 2015).

³² Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number CH0780-PO-72513: <<http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=CH0780-PO-72513>> (accessed October 5, 2015).

³³ Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number CH0780-PO-72514: <<http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=CH0780-PO-72514>> (accessed October 5, 2015).

³⁴ Wasserzeichen-Informationssystem reference number CH0780-PO-725: <<http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/struktur.php?ref=CH0780-PO-72516>> (accessed October 5, 2015).

Contributors

The paper by KENNETH E. CARPENTER stems from his work on a bibliography of Benjamin Franklin's "Way to Wealth," which is itself an offshoot of a larger descriptive and analytical bibliography of pre-1851 translations of economic literature among the European cultures. Mr. Carpenter began work on the bibliography during the 1970s when he was curator of the Kress Library of Business and Economics in Baker Library at the Harvard Business School. In his retirement from the Harvard Library he is moving it toward completion.

JOSÉ MARÍA CASTAÑÉ, an engineer and an economist, is a Spanish financial and industrial entrepreneur who spearheaded in the early eighties the private equity investment activity in Spain, an activity he has pursued until 2013. During the last 27 years, he has devoted part of his energies to collecting original documents pertaining to the world's political and military upheavals of the XXth century. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Museo del Prado and the Founder and Chairman of Fundación José María Castañé in Madrid, an institution to which he donated the collection of historic documents. The Fundación, together with him, has made a gift of the core of this collection, consisting in almost three thousand documents to Harvard, which now form part of Houghton Library of the Harvard Library.

DR. GRIGORY KESSEL is affiliated with the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Manchester and specializes in the study of the literary heritage of Syriac Christianity, with particular attention to its manuscript tradition. Besides manuscripts (most recently, with M. Bernabò, "A Syriac Four Gospel Book in Diyarbakır," *Convivium* 3, no. 1 [2016]: 172-203), his publications deal with Syriac medical ("Inventory of Galen's Extant Works in Syriac," in *Hunayn Ibn Ishāq on His Galen Translations* [2016]) and monastic texts ("The Manuscript Heritage of Isaac of Nineveh: A Survey of Syriac Manuscripts," in *The Syriac Writers of Qatar in the Seventh Century* [2014]), as well as bibliographic research (*A Bibliography of Syriac Ascetic and Mystical Literature* [2011]). Kessel is a participant in a number of cataloging projects, including the Sinai Palimpsest Project and those of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. At present he

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