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OLD BOOKS, NEW TECHNOLOGIES. THE RENAISSANCE TRANS-
MISSION AND RECEPTION OF CICERO'S LETTERS
AS A CASE IN POINT

1. *Introduction*

In his pioneering study on *Cicero through the Ages*, Theodor Zielinski famously wrote that «the Renaissance was first and foremost a revival of Cicero, and only after him, and thanks to him, of the rest of classical Antiquity»¹. Although it is obviously exaggerated to consider the entire revival of classical culture merely a corollary of Cicero's rebirth, one cannot possibly overestimate his importance as a cultural and literary model in this period. All humanists were avid readers of Cicero's speeches as well as of his treatises on philosophy, rhetoric, and law. They admired his literary genius and were, even to a fault, enthusiast imitators of his style. Moreover, as Cicero had been actively involved in the affairs of the Roman Republic, even paying his dedication to the republican cause with his life, he was also regarded as a political role model, whose civic values held great appeal.

As Cicero's afterlife is one of the most varied and wide-ranging of any classical author, scholars wishing to study his reception are invariably confronted with what William Altman described as «simply too much of Cicero to master»². Paradoxically, but also quite understandably, the overwhelming amount of relevant source materials has hindered rather than stimulated exhaustive research efforts. Consequently, although scholarship in this field is thriving³, the Renaissance Cicero has still not received attention proportionate to his importance.

This goes in particular for the letters, which were all-important for the humanist appreciation of Cicero. The *Epistulae ad familiares* (*fam.*), as well as the letters to Cicero's brother Quintus (*Quint.*), to his best friend Atticus (*Att.*) and to Caesar's murderer Brutus (*Brut.*), had been out of sight during

¹ Zielinski 1912, 137: «dass die Renaissance vor allen Dingen eine Wiederbelebung Ciceros und erst nach ihm und dank ihm des übrigen klassischen Altertums war».

² Altman 2015, 5.

³ See, for instance, the recent collected volumes on Cicero's *Nachleben* by Steel 2013, Van Deusen 2013, Altman 2015 and Manuwald 2016.

the entire Middle Ages and were rediscovered by Petrarch and Coluccio Salutati in 1345 and 1392 respectively. Thanks to the pedagogue Guarino Veronese they became, from the fifteenth century onwards, a core element of the humanist educational programme, substituting the medieval *ars dictaminis* as a model for letter-writing. Yet, while the wide and far-reaching popularity of Cicero's epistles is well-known, to date their precise transmission and reception in the Renaissance have hardly been studied, and certainly not in a systematic way.

To address this lacuna, I am currently conducting a research project entitled *Cicero, Man of Letters. The Reception of Cicero's Epistles in the Renaissance*, which is funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO Vlaanderen) and runs until early 2022. The goal of this project is to offer a comprehensive study of all Cicero letters editions printed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, since these books contained not only the actual text of Cicero's epistles but also a number of interesting paratexts (such as dedicatory letters, prefaces, commentaries and so on) that were specifically designed to guide the reading, interpretation and use of Cicero's letters. Consequently, by surveying these editions it should be possible to establish which letters were published, when and where, by whom, for whom, in which language and why, and to determine how these letters were read and interpreted in this period and which image of Cicero they spread.

Since the material evidence for such a study is scattered across tens if not hundreds of libraries all over the world, and documented in as many different catalogues, this project could not have been easily accomplished without the use of digital resources – or at least not by one single researcher in a few years' time. The advent of digital humanities has naturally opened up exciting new possibilities and offers us, as Craig Kallendorf states in his recent study on the early modern printed editions of Virgil, «the potential to do better work more quickly» – and economically, one might add! – «than ever before»⁴. In the following pages, I will describe how I went about collecting, organising and interpreting the source materials, with special attention to the methods followed, the digital resources used and the planned digital output, before presenting some intermediate results of my study of the Cicero letters editions printed up to 1550. Throughout, I will highlight not only the prospects but also the limitations and possible pitfalls of these new technologies for studying old books.

⁴ Kallendorf 2020, 168.

2. *Collecting the Evidence: Using the USTC*

In order to be able to study all extant printed editions of the letters, it is of course essential to first have a list of these editions that is as complete as possible. Before the age of digital humanities this first step would have already posed quite a challenge, as one would have had to compile data from a wide range of printed bibliographical sources. Nowadays, however, much of this information can be conveniently accessed together through the [Universal Short Title Catalogue \(USTC\)](#), which is «A digital bibliography of early modern print culture» that aims to list every book published from the invention of printing in the early 1450s up until 1700. The merits of this ambitious and much admirable undertaking are legion. First, the recently redesigned website presents a mass of information – by the latest count, the USTC comprises 780.000 editions with 4.000.000 surviving copies from 8.500 libraries, archives and museums – in a simple and accessible way⁵. Moreover, the database has ample options for searching, sorting and filtering, using the criteria of author, title, imprint, printer, place, region, format, subject, language and date. It also very helpfully lists the known physical copies and offers direct links to any available digital reproductions, as well as to the «underlying» catalogues on which the USTC is based. And, last but not least, it provides a unique five- or six-digit identifier for each edition, which handily substitutes the earlier references to GW, ISTC, EDIT16, VD16 and so on.

While these features make the USTC an invaluable tool for anyone working with early printed editions, and enables scholars to do research in ways that would not have been possible fifty or even twenty years ago, it is not without a few challenges for the user. Like Freyja Cox Jensen, who in 2018 used the USTC for a statistical study on the popularity of ancient historians in print, I found it particularly difficult to extract from the database as complete a list as possible of editions of one specific author or work. Since the reasons for this are well explained by Cox Jensen herself⁶, here I will state but two of them. On the one hand, as is clear from its name, the USTC gives only the short title of any edition, meaning that if Cicero's letters are included in edi-

⁵ Please note that between the final redaction of this article in October 2021 and its publication in December 2021, the USTC website was again updated and redesigned.

⁶ See Cox Jensen 2018, especially 11-14.

tions entitled *Opera omnia Ciceronis* these may not be found when searching for books with «Cicero» as their author and «epist*» in the title – though sometimes they are, as there is obviously much more information available in the background than what is visible to the website's users. On the other hand, not all found hits are relevant, as the search just mentioned also brings up items such as USTC 629346, which is a 1544 Cologne edition of Vives' handbook on letter-writing (*Brevissima maximeque compendiarum conficiendarum epistolarum formula compendiosae institutiones artis oratoriae compendium*), where Cicero is listed as «additional author» when he was in fact just one of Vives' sources. The problem is thus twofold. First, it has proven quite impossible to retrieve all relevant results in one single search; consequently, it is also impossible to have all relevant results in one single list and make adequate use of the available filters. And secondly, it is clear that all found data should be verified and interpreted, and one should think very carefully about what to include and what not. On a more practical note, it is also highly regrettable that it is not possible to export these data *en masse*. Instead, you have to copy paste every single item you are interested in, which is not very user friendly.

Furthermore, by going beyond such statistical research and also studying the original books, I noted some additional problems with the USTC. Most notably, it contains a considerable number of «double entries», as what turns out to be one and the same edition is listed twice (or multiple times). Actual omissions are few, as I have been able to find only eleven Cicero letters editions that were not yet listed in the database. Much more common, and probably also inevitable in a project of this scale, are small errors that can only be brought to light (and remedied) by consulting the book itself – which was obviously not always done by the USTC team, who seem to have simply copied the information from the original catalogues without double checking. For example, mistakes in transcribing the Roman dates are easily made, and, in some cases, this results in the creation of «bibliographical ghosts». Also, the information on library copies is not always correct, *e.g.* when no physical copy seems to be present in said library, or when it is present but has another shelf mark, or when digital copies are attached to the wrong entry. Every entry in the database now has an «amend» button, but even if the USTC team is in my experience most grateful for any corrections and additions, they take quite some time to process.

Consequently, when using data from the USTC one should always proceed with caution and critically assess the information given, using also other, more specialised catalogues and studying as many of the editions as possible oneself.

3. *Sorting the Evidence: Constructing a FileMaker Database*

Given the limitations imposed by the USTC, in order to make the data usable I had no other option than to compile my own list of relevant editions, with the parameters that are important for my research project. From the outset, it was clear that I would be dealing with big data, which ideally should be linked. So rather than aiming at the paper publication of such a listing, as it has been done for editions of Cicero's speeches by Lawrence Green and James Murphy in 2006 and for Virgil by Craig Kallendorf in 2012, I decided to produce a relational FileMaker database that is easy to update and consult. This database currently serves for personal use only, but could be quite easily converted into a simple website once completed.

The database looks as follows for editors:

The screenshot shows a FileMaker database record for 'Cicero, Man of Letters'. The record is identified by ID 142. The main title is 'Cicero, Man of Letters'. The record contains the following data:

- seen:** X
- Date:** 1511
- Place:** Leipzig
- Printer:** Wolfgang Monacensis (Stöckel)
- Editor:** Hieronymus Cingulatinorus (Gürtler)
- Translator:** /
- Commentator:** /
- Contributor:** Nicolaus Aedeler
- Language:** Latin
- Cicero_Letters:** Epistolae familiares atque breuiores collectae ac denuo vigili cura elimatae
- Additional_Texts:** Vita Ciceronis "ex Platarcho Graeco historiographo" (actually based on §4 of Leonardo Bruni's Cicero nouus) Versus XII sapientum positi in epitaphio Ciceronis (= Anth. Lat. 603-614 Riese)
- USTC:** 138 675021 <https://ustc.ac.uk/editions/675021>
- Digital_Reproductions:** 90 Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 <http://mdz-nbn->

Additional details visible on the right side of the record include:

- Year 1:** 1511
- Year 2:** 1511
- directness_day_month:** [] []
- directness_full_date:** [] [] []
- date_extra:** [] []
- Contributors:**
 - 86 Wolfgang Monacensis (printer)
 - 88 Hieronymus Cingulatinorus (editor)
 - 141 Nicolaus Aedeler (contributor)
- Cicero_Letters_Details:** Fam. 1. 1. 1. 3. 1. 6. 2. 1. 2. 4. 2. 8-9. 2. 11-12. 2. 14. 2. 18-19. 3. 1-4. 3. 13. 4. 1. 4. 8. 4. 10. 4. 15. 5. 4-5. 5. 7. 5. 11. 5. 15. 5. 18. 6. 9. 6. 11. 6. 17. 7. 4. 7. 6-7. 7. 9. 7. 13. 7. 15-16. 7. 19. 7. 21-22. 7. 24. 7. 27. 7. 31. 9. 1. 9. 5. 9. 11-12. 9. 19. 9. 23. 10. 2. 10. 10. 10. 14. 10. 18. 10. 19. 10. 22. 10. 27. 11. 6. 11. 6. 11. 15. 11. 17. 11. 22. 11. 25. 11. 29. 12. 4. 12. 9-8. 12. 19. 12. 21. 12. 23. 12. 27. 13. 2-3. 13. 12-14. 13. 20. 13. 22-23. 13. 25. 13. 30-41. 13. 43-49. 2. 14. 13. 50. 13. 52-55. 13. 57-66. 13. 69-71. 13. 73-76. 13. 78-79. 14. 6. 14. 8-20.
- Notes:** The title page of this edition has an epigram by Nicolaus Aedeler. The individual letters are introduced by arguments.

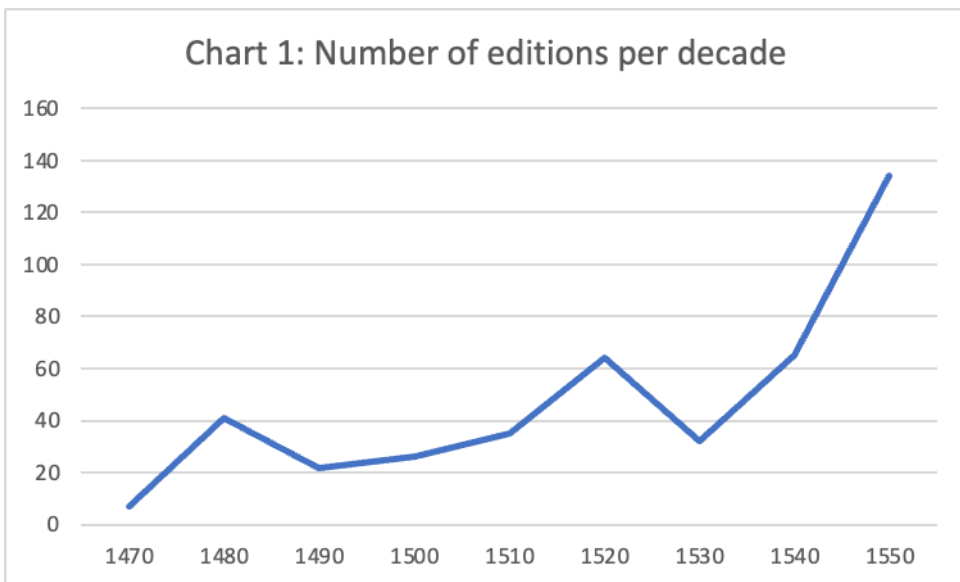
It presently has 426 records, one for every edition I found for the period up until 1550. Every entry has a unique ID, and immediately below is indicated whether or not I have seen a copy of this edition myself, either in person or using digital reproductions. These reproductions are listed bottom right, with a clear indication of the original city/library/shelf mark of the physical copy and a direct link to the digitised one. Bottom left, then, comes the corresponding USTC reference number – or numbers, because when identical items are listed twice in the USTC I obviously gave them but one ID. The same goes for editions printed in multiple volumes, as well as for different states of one and the same edition. In the sixteenth century, printers working within one and the same city often cooperated to produce one edition, sharing both the costs and the risks: such editions existed in different states, which are identical apart from their title pages, each of which mentions the name of one printer only. In the USTC these are counted as different items, but as some editions existed in four, five, or even up to eight different states the overall picture risks getting distorted, for in the end it concerns but one moment of transmission and reception. Also different from the USTC, I tried to distinguish very clearly between the various people behind the book, namely any editors, translators, commentators or contributors of other paratexts, and of course the printer, which is mentioned top left together with the date and place of publication. Moreover, while the USTC offers only limited information on the actual contents of the editions, the fields in the middle indicate not only the language of publication but also which collections of Cicero letters are included (and sometimes more in detail: which letters), with which additional texts.

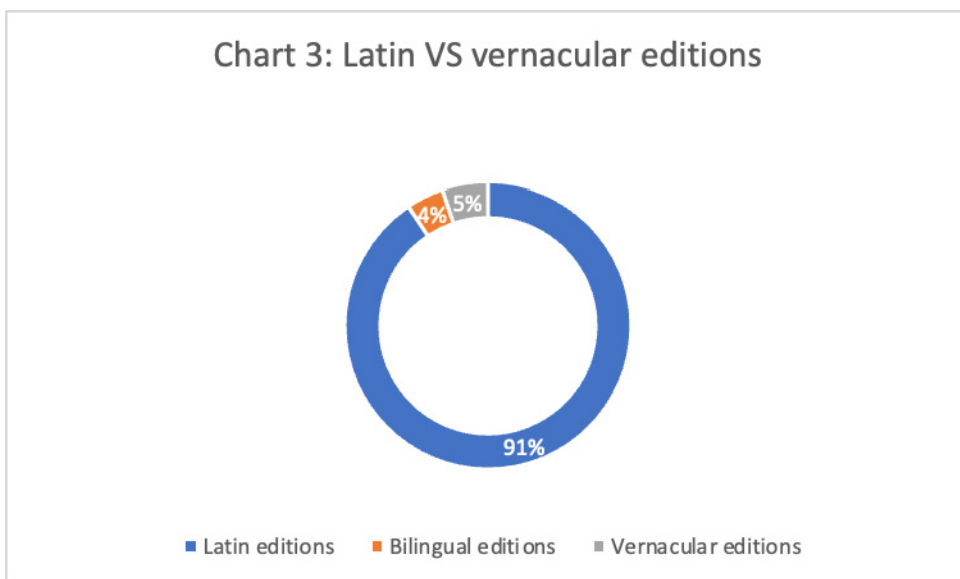
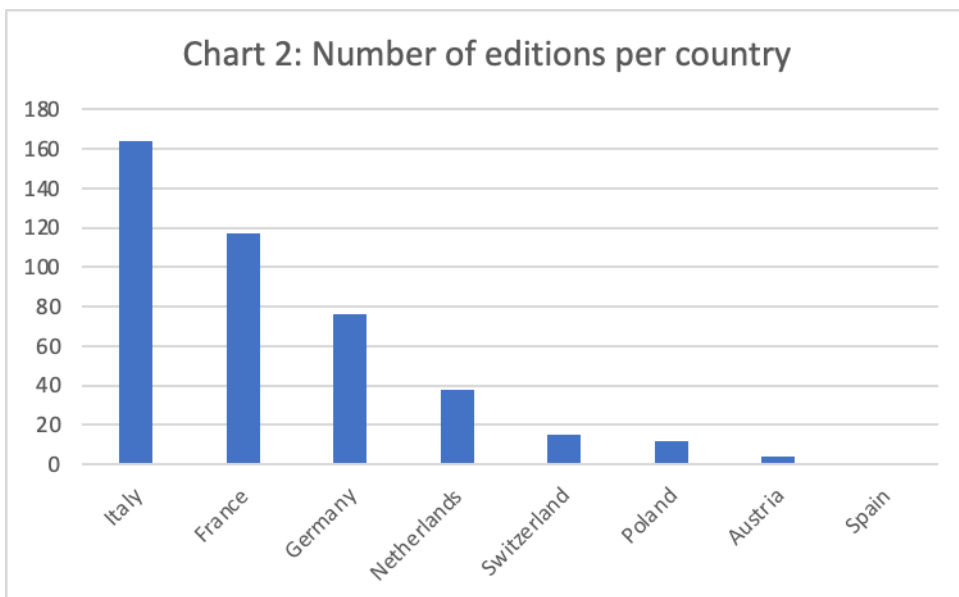
4. *Interpreting the evidence*

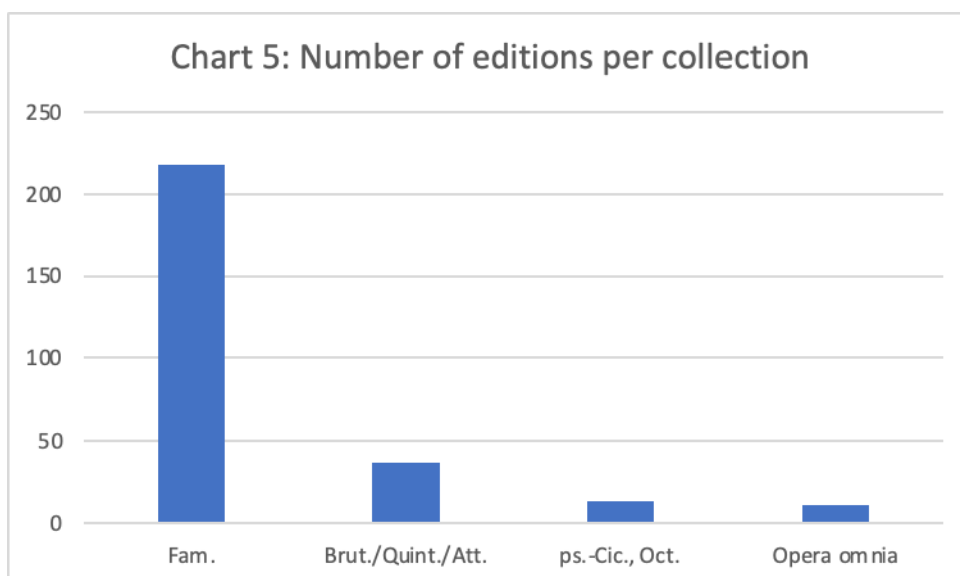
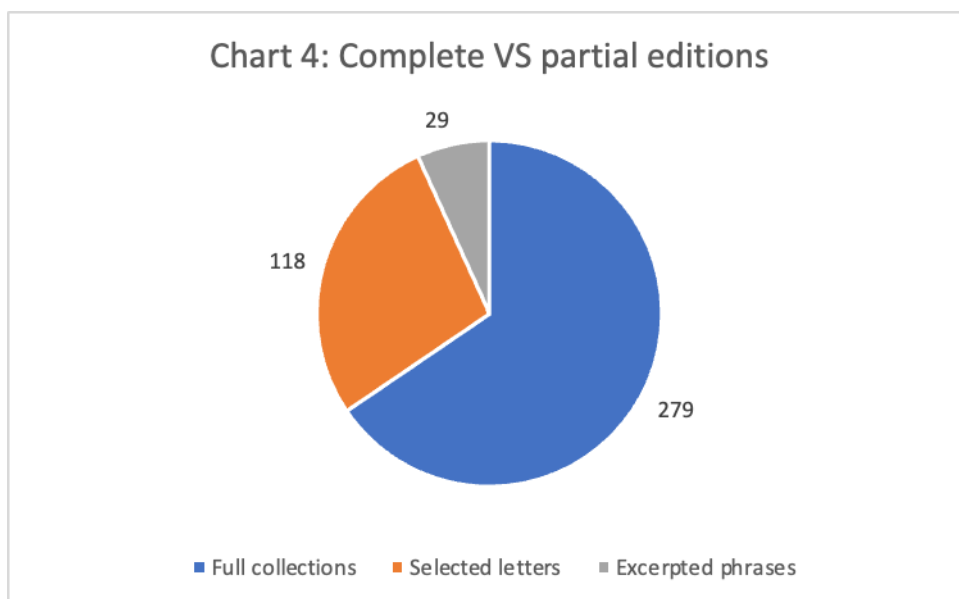
4.1. Transmission

Using all of this information, one can very precisely reconstruct the transmission of Cicero's letters in print, and answer the questions of (1) when and (2) where these editions were published, (3) in which language, and (4) which letters were read more than others. **When?** Looking at the number of editions printed every year, every five years or – as in Chart 1 – every decade, one notices that this number

gradually rises from 1470 to 1540, with two peaks around 1480 and 1520, and increases exponentially from 1540 onwards. **Where?** Regarding the cities, regions or – as in Chart 2 – countries where Cicero's letters were printed, it is evident that by far most editions were printed in Italy, France and Germany, followed at a distance by the Netherlands, Switzerland, Poland and Austria. Remarkably, up until 1550 not a single edition of Cicero's letters was printed in Spain. **Which language?** Looking at the ratio of Latin VS vernacular editions in Chart 3, Cicero's letters were almost always read in the original language (91%); only 5% of the editions contained translations (most of them in French and Italian, and few in Greek) and another 4% were bilingual (containing both the Latin and the Italian, French or German version). **Which letters?** As can be seen in Charts 4 and 5, some letters were in fact read more than others: about two in three printed editions contained the full text of one or more of Cicero's letter collections, and the vast majority of those involved the letters *Ad familiares*, whereas those to Brutus, Quintus and Atticus (which were often characterised as «more obscure») were far less popular – and the same ratio can be seen within editions containing only selected letters, or excerpted phrases.

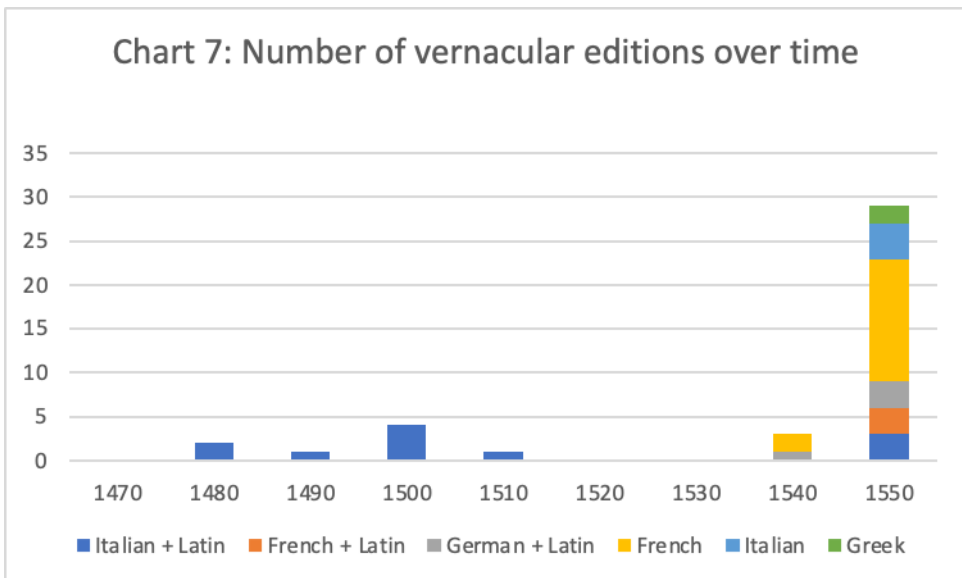
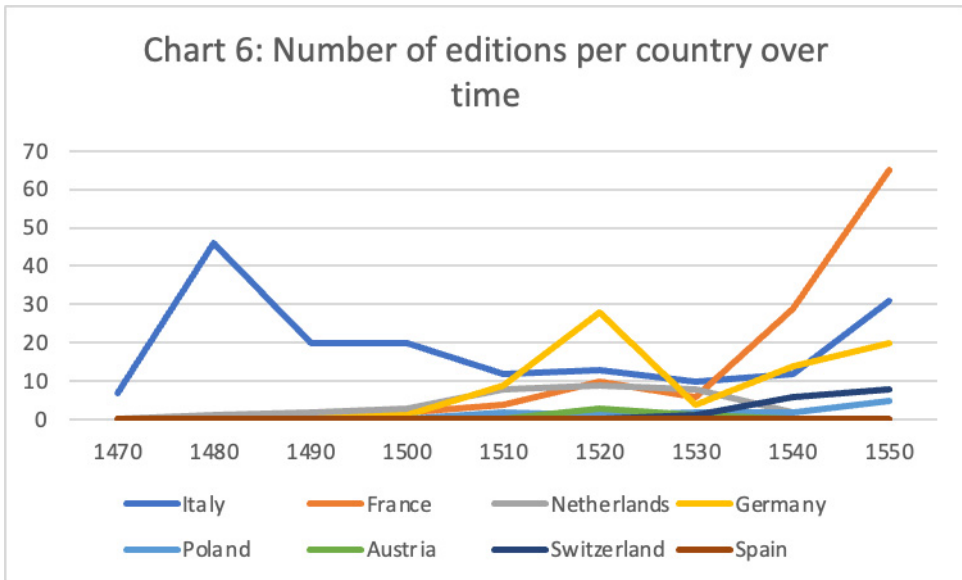






Interestingly, one can combine these features and study for instance the geographical distribution of the editions over time. From Chart 6, it can be seen that while Italy held centre stage in the incunabulum period, Germany produced a remarkable number of editions between 1510 and 1530, after

which date France became the most important country. This is also reflected in the number of vernacular editions over time in Chart 7, which clearly shows that there was a limited number of bilingual Latin/Italian editions before 1510, not a single vernacular version in the following decades and quite an explosion of mainly French translations towards 1550.



While such figures provide us with valuable information concerning the transmission of Cicero's letters, a few caveats are in order. First, it must be borne in mind that the place where a book was printed is not necessarily where it was sold or read. Secondly, the fact that a book was printed does not necessarily mean that it was sold, or, if it was sold, that it was read at all. Furthermore, these figures do not take into account the number of copies printed of each edition, nor works still circulating in manuscript form, nor books in the second-hand market – but above all: they reveal nothing about the actual contents of the books, or *which Cicero* was being read. Consequently, in addition to the letters' printing history it is essential also to study the form and contents of the individual editions, as well as the evolution in their lay-out or print presentation.

4.2. Using digital reproductions

Needless to say, the comparative study of such large numbers of editions has been greatly facilitated by the proliferation of digital reproductions. Since the actual books are dispersed in libraries all over the world, and some editions have survived in only one or two copies, in the old days researchers would have had to do a lot of travelling to study all of these materials. Now, however, that ever more libraries are having their Special Collections digitised, and hordes of materials have become available through projects such as Early English Books Online and Google Books, scholars have easy access to these editions from home – which proved a blessing during the COVID-19 pandemic – and can sometimes even download and annotate the reproductions in their personal «virtual» library. Still, no matter how sophisticated the software, when viewing old books on one's computer screen one misses out on particular aspects of the original reading experience such as the feel, smell and weight of these books. Moreover, not all books have been digitised with equal diligence: sometimes pages are missing from the digital copy, or put in the wrong order. And finally, there is a risk that the wealth of digital copies available may eventually make people forget about the «real» books, as if what is not digitised does not exist, or is not worth studying.

4.3. Reception

From the above, it is clear that this project makes full use of digital resources in collecting, sorting and analysing the evidence. To interpret this evidence and map out Cicero's reception, however, one cannot but

apply the traditional, old-school philological method of careful close reading of all the (Latin and vernacular) paratexts in all of these editions, especially the dedicatory letters and letters to the readers, as well as any commentaries – which is a time-consuming and challenging, but also a highly rewarding endeavour. For, by studying the successive editions not only *an sich* but also in relation to one another and as part of a bigger tradition, it is possible to reconstruct the chain of receptions and to reach some wider conclusions about the ways in which Cicero's letters were read and interpreted over a longer period of time, all over Europe, by an ever wider readership.

Since this story cannot possibly be told within the scope of this article, I will conclude by offering a preliminary answer, based on my study of the 226 Cicero letters editions printed between 1467 and 1550 which I have been able to consult so far, to the question of whether the obvious attention given to the formal aspects of Cicero's letters (as stylistic and literary models for letter-writing) was matched by an interest in their content.

4.4. Form

To begin with, it is clear that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Cicero's epistles were indeed first and foremost read and used as Latin style-models for humanist epistolography. This is perhaps most obvious in the many editions stemming from, or destined for use in, the schools, which were not only printed in major cities but also produced locally. A considerable portion of these editions contained only specific books or letters, and sometimes just excerpted phrases, often arranged in thematic order, which the pupils were expected to memorise and imitate in their own writing⁷. But also outside of this immediate school context, several editions contained little introductions to letter-writing⁸, or a ta-

⁷ These two terms often appear in close conjunction, see e.g. Benedictus Maffeus' dedicatory letter in the edition printed after 13 November 1483 [USTC 995950], unnumbered fol.: *Guarinus Veronensis et Leonardus Aretinus [...] has Ciceronis familiares epistolas ad studiosorum adolescentium facilem et brevem eruditionem elegere, ut ipsi adolescentes huiusmodi brevitare allekti epistolas ipsas memorie traditas Ciceronem ipsum assidua exercitatione facile imitari possent.*

⁸ The best known and most frequently reprinted treatise is Jodocus Badius Ascensius' *De epistolarum compositione compendium*, first published in 1502 [USTC 182452, 182482, 186525, 186529, 186554, 209894, 209906, 209907, 210000] and subsequently revised in 1505, 1507 and 1511 [USTC 182624, 143043, 180266, 187189, 180611]; other examples include Johannes Gabriel's *Componendi epistolas modus* in 1489 [USTC 994871] and Johannes Pinicianus' *Ars epistolica* in 1534 [USTC 654966]. In the following footnotes I cite on-

ble of contents indicating where a reader might find good examples of letters of consolation, recommendation or complaint. Throughout the paratexts of both scholarly and school editions, Cicero was time and again presented as the pre-eminent source and model of Latin eloquence, often with reference to Quintilian's famous *dictum* that «for posterity Cicero has come to be considered not the name of a man but of eloquence itself»⁹. His style of letter-writing was traditionally praised as copious, elegant, facile, pure and pleasant. Admittedly, in 1526 the humanist editor Nicolaus Scoelsius cited Sidonius Apollinaris, Calvus, Brutus and Tacitus to remind those «blinded by love for Cicero» that in Antiquity his style of letter-writing had not met with unanimous approval; in *fam.* 9, 21, moreover, Cicero himself admitted that the style of his letters is very different from that of his speeches, and, according to Scoelsius, not very special compared to other writers¹⁰. However, this is truly the exception that proves the rule.

Whether Cicero was considered the only model worth following – I am referring now to the vehement debate on Ciceronianism, which pitted those believing that good Latin style should be modelled exclusively on Cicero against the eclectics, who found stylistic excellence in a variety of models¹¹ – is less clear. Significantly, in the very first commentary on the letters to be printed (1479) the school teacher Hubertinus Clericus urged and begged his students to apply themselves wholly to the study of eloquence. They should start, he explains, by reading Cicero's familiar letters day and night, and they should memorise and imitate, practice and enjoy them, before moving on to the other no less learned than elegant books of Cicero. Finally, they should turn to the other approved Latin authors, yet in such a way that they appoint Cicero alone (*hunc unum*) as their standard-bearer or commander to obey and follow¹². Still,

ly the first occurrence of each printed commentary or translation, as some of them were reissued numerous times.

⁹ Quint. *inst.* 10, 1, 112: *Apud posteros vero id consecutus ut Cicero iam non hominis nomen sed eloquentiae habeatur.*

¹⁰ USTC 822123, fols. aiiiir-v.

¹¹ See e.g. Sabbadini 1885, McLaughlin 1995, and, more recently, DellaNeva-Duvick 2007.

¹² USTC 995656, fol. A3r: *Quamobrem pueros adolescentesque omnes non solum exhortor verum etiam obsecro ut eloquentiae studiis [...] totis viribus incumbant atque adeo ex his familiaribus epistolis initia sumant, has die noctuque legant, has ediscant, has imitentur, in his se exercent, his se oblectent; deinde alios Ciceronis non minus eruditos quam elegantes libros evolvant et tamen alios quoque Romanae linguae probatos auctores ita ament et legant, ut hunc unum sibi vel vexiliferum vel potius ducem constituent quem sequantur.* This

the general idea seems to have been that one should read and follow «all the best authors» (again echoing Quintilian)¹³. In the genre of epistolography this meant first and foremost Cicero, but in early modern school editions his selected letters were regularly printed together with those of Pliny, and once even with some of Seneca's letters to Lucilius (1548-1549)¹⁴. Moreover, in a number of editions meant for use in schools in Wroclaw (1539, 1542, 1549), Cicero's and Pliny's letters were printed together with those of humanist writers, some of which (like Christophorus Longolius and Petrus Bembus) were true «Ciceronians», while others (such as Poliziano and Erasmus) favoured an eclectic style¹⁵.

4.5. Content

Although Cicero's letters were mainly studied as models of language and style, humanist readers were definitely also interested in their content. This is well exemplified by Valentinus Erythraeus, a pupil of the renowned German pedagogue Johannes Sturm, who in 1550 commented on Sturm's selection of Cicero's letters using Rodolphus Agricola's logical-rhetorical method. While in the commentary itself Erythraeus does not discuss any *res* or *verba* yet limits himself to offering *praecepta dicendi ac disserendi*, in his dedicatory letter he did point out that in addition to many outstanding illustrations of rhetoric and dialectic, the letters also contain a wealth of historical information, as well as moral and political wisdom¹⁶.

That Cicero's letters were seen as historical documents is also evident from the various paratexts attached to other early editions. In their prefatory letters, several editors, translators and commentators point out that the epistles *Ad familiares*, and even more so those *Ad Brutum* and *Ad Atticum*, offer a privileged window onto the times of Cicero, since the author himself was not only witness to, but also played an important

statement was repeated by later editors of Cicero's letters such as Hieronymus Cingulatorinus in 1505 [USTC 240150] and Josephus Horlennius in 1516 [USTC 674981].

¹³ Quint. *inst.* 10, 1, 20: *Ac diu non nisi optimus quisque et qui credentem sibi minime fallat legendus est.*

¹⁴ USTC 51157.

¹⁵ USTC 241110, 241285, 241472.

¹⁶ USTC 674409, 3: *Nam et historias plurimas privatarum publicarumque rerum, quae nos erudire possunt, continent ea volumina, et gravissimas habent sententias ad civilem moremque scientiam pertinentes, et pulcherrima atque optima in ipsis sunt rhetoricae et dialecticae exempla, quibus praecepta earum artium explanantur et illustrantur.*

role in the affairs of the Roman Republic¹⁷. In this respect, reference is often made to Cornelius Nepos, who in his *Life of Atticus* (which was also traditionally included in the Cicero letters editions) argued that «whoever reads the letters [to Atticus] will not much require a history of those times»¹⁸. Of the over fifty different Latin commentaries that were printed with Cicero's letters between 1467 and the mid-sixteenth century, Egnatius' notes on the first book of the *Ad familiares* (1508) were most overtly historical in nature¹⁹, though other commentators also discussed points of antiquarian and historical interest²⁰, or offered historical introductions²¹. The popularity of the letters to Cicero's wife Terentia and his secretary Tiro suggest that Cicero's humanist readers were also concerned with Cicero himself, as a person, a statesman, a man. Surprisingly few humanist editors wrote a *Vita Ciceronis* of their own²²; yet several editions do include Plutarch's *Life of Cicero*, either in the Latin translation by Jacobus Angelus or using the adaptation in Leonardo Bruni's *Cicero novus*, while still others have Petrarch's famous letters to Cicero (*fam.* 24, 3 and 24, 4)²³.

¹⁷ See e.g. Johannes Baptista Pius in the commentary edition of 1527 [USTC 822118], unnumbered fol.: *Opus est multiplex, eruditum, eloquens, historicum agens, a quo melius illorum temporum gesta quam ab alio rerum gestarum scriptore noscere poteris, cum ipse singulis gravissimis rebus praeferit nedum interfuerit*. The same idea was expressed by Bartholomaeus Salicetus and Ludovicus Regius in 1490 [USTC 996014], Sebastianus Murrho in 1512 [USTC 674525, 709458], Aldus Manutius in 1513 [USTC 822089], Marianus Tuccius in 1514 [USTC 822088], Johannes Baptista Pius in 1527 [USTC 822118], Sebastiaus Faustus in 1544 [USTC 822249], and Sebastianus Corradus in 1544-1545 [USTC 822248].

¹⁸ Nep. *Att.* 16: [...] *undecim volumina epistularum ab consulatu eius usque ad extremum tempus ad Atticum missarum, quae qui legat non multum desideret historiam contextam eorum temporum*.

¹⁹ USTC 822174, fol. aaiv (from the dedicatory letter): *Est enim hic, ut unus sit, tanta historiarum copia, quae res in primis desiderabatur a prioribus interpretaetibus, aut omissa aut dissimulanter reiecta, ut quae antea eius ignorance obscurissima erant, nunc aperta et perspicua luce immissa sint facta*.

²⁰ See e.g. Georgius Merula in 1491 [USTC 995968], Bernardinus Rutilius in 1528 [USTC 853957], Sebastianus Corradus in 1544-1545 [USTC 822248], and Paulus Manutius in 1547 [USTC 840463].

²¹ See e.g. Hubertinus Clericus in 1479 [USTC 995656], Martinus Phileticus in about 1490 [USTC 995946], Jodocus Badius Ascensius in 1511 [USTC 187189, 180611], Jacobus Lodovicus Strebæus in 1536 [USTC 185653], Johannes Tislinus in 1543 [USTC 140805, 157500], and Sebastianus Faustus in 1544 [USTC 822249].

²² A notable exception is Jodocus Badius Ascensius in 1511 [USTC 187189, 180611].

²³ Other ancient testimonies that were printed together with Cicero's letters are the *Versus XII sapientum positi in epitaphio Ciceronis* (= *Anth. Lat.* 603-614 Riese) in 1511 [USTC 675021]; *De laude et virtute excellentissimi viri Ciceronis eiusque lectionis utilitate ex bonis autoribus accepta* (= *Plin. nat.* 7, 30 and 17, 3) in 1534 [USTC 654966];

Finally, the editions also betray a moral and political interest in Cicero's letters. In his preface, the aforementioned Clericus argued that Cicero's letters teach us how to live and act, as well as how to speak and write²⁴. In 1528 Bernardinus Rutilius, too, stressed the importance of the letters *Ad familiares* for instruction in *mores* and civic life, as they show us what to consider, do, say and wish for in the state²⁵; and in the same year Johannes Baptista Novosoliensis presented Cicero's first letter to Quintus as a mirror-for-princes and a handbook for good and wise rulers²⁶. Since the concrete moral and political lessons to be learned from Cicero's letters are not actually spelled out in any of these commentaries, it is not entirely clear just how they were used for this purpose. Nevertheless, taken together all of these examples demonstrate that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Cicero's letters were read in different yet complementary ways, both as invaluable sources of information on the ancient world and for the practical use they could serve to contemporary, early modern readers.

Livy's *Vita Ciceronis* (= Sen. *suas.* 6, 17 and 6, 22) in 1541 [USTC 674092]; and Cornelius Severus, *De morte Ciceronis* (= Sen. *suas.* 6, 26) in a couple of editions starting from 1542 [USTC 24274].

²⁴ USTC 995656, fol. A2r: *In quarum lectione et imitatione tanta est et rudibus et longius provectis utilitas, ut nesciam an in aliis eius libris ulla maior esse possit, quod in his epistolis praeter tersum quoddam et familiare dicendi genus inest etiam magna philosophiae pars, unde utranque commoditatem et dicendi et vivendi perspicere possumus.*

²⁵ USTC 853957, fol. hir-v: *Quod vero ad mores civilemque vitam attinet, unde magis quam ex his epistolis discas? [...] Quid sentiendum in republica quid agendum dicendumve quid optandum etiam sit docent atque praescribunt.*

²⁶ USTC 240838 (*Epistola ad Quintum fratrem qua boni principis institutio continetur*), fols. Aiv-Aiir: *Atque etiam ut enchiridii forma excuderetur placuit, ut hoc pacta a litterarum amatoribus et ab hiis qui in magistratu aliquo sunt et qui bene et prudenter alios regere et moderari concupiscunt, ad quos praecipue lectio huius libelli spectat, facile et commode in manibus haberi et gestari possit, quem non pauci ut spero ad doctrinam et gloriam republicae bene gerendae aspirantes et magna cum delectatione perlegent. [...] Nam quamvis libellus hic parvus sit, reperient multa et varia praecepta, quorum cognitione et usu informati et expoliti sibi ipsi laudem et honestam nominis sui apud omnes famam, patriae vero et subditis utilitatem, et omnia ornamenta copiose parare poterint et consequi.*

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