

Explore the Record of European Life and Culture

About Collection 10

Early European Books Collection 10 introduces a new collection from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) with over 2,500 titles and approximately 1.3 million pages.

This selection of books is drawn from the Philosophy, History and Human Science (PHS) department of the BnF and features 16th- and 17th-century titles published within the borders of modern-day France. It offers a range of works from a period that transitions to the Enlightenment and the epistemological revolutions of French philosophers and theorists.

Unlike previous selections from the BnF, which reflected the dominance of Paris and – to a lesser extent – Lyon in the early modern French publishing world, this corpus gives wider representation to the provincial press that emerged during the 17th century. This new selection includes contributions from Rouen (then France's second city) as well as from Douai (ceded to France in 1668), Caen, Bordeaux, Troyes, Toulouse and a further network of towns both large and small, of bishopric offices, and of courts and schools.

In the categories of **geography** and **general history**, major reference works of the 17th century are well represented. These titles include a series of editions of the *Grand Dictionnaire Historique* by Louis Moréri (1643-1680), a further series on world history in French and Latin by the Jesuit Horace Turcelin (Orazio Torsellino), the *Rationarium temporum* of Father Denis Petau (1583-1652), the learned treatises of fellow Jesuit Philippe Labbé (1607-1667), and in particular his *Concordia chronologica* published in 5 folio volumes by the Imprimerie Royale. These reference works stand alongside many accounts of travels around the continent (Claude Jordan, Charles Patin, Théodore Turquet de Mayerne, among others) as well as of journeys beyond Europe (Jean Mocquet, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and others). Demonstrating a similar diversity, two editions from the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* by Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) sit with the series of exemplary and moral stories of the prolific bishop of Belley, Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652), published mainly in the provinces.

In **philosophy**, editions from the big names of the Grand Siècle such as René Descartes and Nicolas Malebranche, and the so-called “erudite libertines” like Gabriel Naudé (1600-1653) are particularly of interest. Coverage of **ancient history** and **Catholic theology** is balanced between French and Latin editions. Although Roman history is predominantly covered in Latin, French translations of historians such as Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius, Quintus Curtius, Sallust and Florus abound in the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, modern scholars such as the prelate Nicolas Coeffeteau (1574-1623) and the French historiographer Scipion Dupleix (1569-1661) make their contributions in folio format in their *Histoire romaine*.

Works on **theology** reflect equally the extensive output of scholarly works and dogma (mainly 16-century titles published in Paris and Lyon). They also reveal the intensity of disputes – particularly those surrounding the emergence of Jansenism (from the mid-seventeenth century onward) – and encompasses progress of “Christian humanism.” This movement was advocated by St Francis de Sales and extended through literature intended for the faithful, among them Tridentine and diocesan catechisms. Through these texts, links can be traced between the religious controversies and conflicts that marked the 16th century, and the equally virulent debates that characterized the 17th century.

