



EARLY EUROPEAN BOOKS

Collection Detail

A comprehensive digitized collection of European printed works from the Early Modern Period



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Early European Books

The collections in Early European Books bring online over 200 years of remarkable works from pre-18th century Europe. Early European Books takes scholars on an international exploration of life and culture in the early modern period by giving online access to a deep digital archive of rare books from the shelves of the leading national libraries of Europe.

The contents are drawn from major repositories including the Danish Royal Library, the National Central Library in Florence, the National Library of France, the National Library of the Netherlands, and the Wellcome Library in London. From 2025, Early European Books will also include materials from The British Library and University College London.



THE PROFOUND IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON RESEARCH

Digitization of early modern books has revolutionized scholarship by enabling around-the-clock access to rare material that was once limited to those with the time and budget to visit far-flung places.

Watch a video on digitization of Early European Books:

Several scholars and curators, from both the University of St. Andrews, Scotland and the Bibliotheque National de France (BnF) explain the curation and digitization of the materials, and the importance of metadata, and it's enhancement, to researchers and scholars of this period.

[Watch Video](#)

Read the Case Study from Professor Andrew Pettegree:

Opening New Worlds to Researchers with Early Modern Historical Materials. Professor Pettegree, director of the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), discusses USTC's collaboration with ProQuest, challenges in the study of early print books, and the future of scholarship in this area.

[Read Case Study](#)

EARLY EUROPEAN BOOKS COLLECTION DETAILS

Collection	Content From	Number of Titles	Number of Pages
COLLECTION 1: Covers Danish and Icelandic imprints, from the earliest works to works by the astronomer and alchemist Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) and his follower Johannes Kepler (1571-1630).	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	2,596	514,732
COLLECTION 2: The selection of works focuses on four collections of historic importance to the Florence library, including over 770 items printed by the Aldine Press .	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	2,752	615,222
COLLECTION 3: Coverage of works from major European centres that led to the explosion of the print industry. Topics cover history of science , pamphlets on the Dutch revolt, Dürer's fine art illustrations, maps from the age of exploration.	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	698	105,588
	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	2,540	651,559
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	5,255	1,360,923
	Wellcome Library, London	1,752	709,113
	Total	10,245	2,826,327
COLLECTION 4: Almost three million pages feature the rites and ceremonies of religious life , such as the first inclusion of volumes (c.1700) from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the first Protestant Bible in French, as well as translations of <i>Fathers of the Church</i> .	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	1,771	482,014
	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	1,401	582,017
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	2,458	599,153
	Wellcome Library, London	1,554	595,970
	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (BnF)	2,089	641,431
	Total	9,273	2,900,585
COLLECTION 5: Period works by Nostradamus, physician Thomas Bartholin and alchemist George Riley are joined by classical texts by Aesop, Juvenal, Hippocrates and Catullus.	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	2,189	554,999
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	2,085	557,699
	Wellcome Library, London	1,421	552,712
	Total	5,695	1,665,410
COLLECTION 6: Covers original works and translations from classical authors, debates between contemporary figures on the Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation , as well as items on French regional customs and folklore.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	3,759	1,400,005
COLLECTION 7: Covers a range of subjects including astronomy, philosophy, literature and aesthetics . Curiosities like household calendars and the first ever Danish cookbook (1616) as well as Leon Battista Alberti's seminal work on architecture.	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	2,592	791,743
	Wellcome Library, London	2,211	795,914
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	2,704	378,111
	Total	7,507	1,965,768
COLLECTION 8: With strong focus on religious texts on liturgy and ritual, the collection also covers notable works on literary, philosophical, historical, geographical, legal, political and economic content.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	5,358	1,724,206
COLLECTION 9: The theme of medicine and science with rare incunabula from Wellcome Library's History of Medicine collection.	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	1,356	719,260
	Wellcome Library, London	1,974	687,678
	Total	3,330	1,406,938
COLLECTION 10: Philosophy and history items from a period that transitions to the Enlightenment. This selection includes contributions from other centers in France from Rouen to Toulouse and a network of towns and bishopric offices.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	2,628	1,356,741

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COLLECTION 11: Religion and religious thought from Northern Europe as part of the anniversary of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses of 1517 which heralded the Protestant Reformation.	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	1,821	375,307
	Wellcome Library, London	148	58,570
	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	22	7,204
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	292	39,004
	Total	2,283	480,085
COLLECTION 12: A selection of titles on history and governance drawn from works published across France and beyond, covering classical times, histories of Europe, of the Middle East and accounts of the New World as well as studies in military history, antiquities and numismatics.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	1,236	568,831
COLLECTION 13: A vast selection of works around literature, drama, poetry and education . Content varies from theatrical and literary pieces from the classical period to writings in the early modern period in Europe.	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	189	63,652
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek – The Royal Library, Copenhagen	1,661	96,928
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	2,990	219,424
	Wellcome Library, London	226	78,700
	Total	5,066	458,704
COLLECTION 14: A selection of titles strongly focused on philosophy, medicine and science . Items testify to the spirit of curiosity that characterized the early modern period and demonstrate some of the remarkable medical, scientific and intellectual advancements of the time.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	1,100	490,000
COLLECTION 15: Featuring selections based on the twin themes of science and religion . Martin Luther sparked the Reformation while Nicolaus Copernicus introduced the idea of a heliocentric universe that helped trigger a revolution in science. Pivotal to both these changes was the invention of the printing press. Collection 15 reveals and reflects the links between printing, the Reformation and the scientific revolution.	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	127	35,978
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	191	36,993
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	1,671	134,768
	Wellcome Library, London	1,121	477,926
	Total	3,110	685,665
COLLECTION 16: A rich survey of the many facets of early modern French culture highlighting several subject areas, with the inclusion of items from the <i>Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal</i> , a treasured part of the national library.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	837	319,300
	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal	513	195,700
	Total	1,350	515,000
COLLECTION 17: A focus on law and politics , with discourses on government and political theory. Materials in this collection includes ordinances, edicts, proclamations and political tracts on topics of jurisprudence.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	989	449,963
	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal	194	60,704
	Total	1,183	510,667
COLLECTION 18: Dedicated to the theme of history and chronicles , with a strong focus on national, regional and civic French history, histories of important contemporary influential rulers and works that span the Ottoman Empire, the history of China and beyond.	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal	900	508,900
COLLECTION 19: Covers government travel reports , letters, religious journals, ethnographic monographs and writings inspired by travel within and beyond European borders.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	1,000	480,000

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COLLECTION 20: Reflects the intensification of religious practice in France at a time of immense change in wider Europe. It covers the memoirs of prominent French religious leaders as they responded to theological change. There are writings on Christian history, and the intercession and sacred treasures of saints, with insights into the cosmologies of family life, as different types of religious rituals marked key events throughout a life.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	900	370,000
COLLECTION 21: Maintaining law and order through laws, ordinances, edicts and political tracts was not the only preoccupation throughout war-torn early modern Europe. There was also much debate around the concepts of peace and how it could be achieved and maintained for the well-being of the state and the individual.	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	29	9,108
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek - The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	320	42,789
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	4,749	194,553
	Wellcome Library, London	16	5,660
	Total	5,114	252,110
COLLECTION 22: PASTIMES IN EARLY MODERN FRANCE The culture of France is eclectically represented in this collection as it covers pastimes and recreation, classical works, travel guides, dictionaries, vocabularies, phrase books, instruction in foreign languages and winemaking. This will be the last French collection from the BnF.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	556	291,210
COLLECTION 23: EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND CULTURAL LIFE Include items from across Northern Europe that were important educational texts as well as insights into cultural life. Works cover music, culinary arts, philosophical works, heraldic works, and genealogies.	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	27	12,404
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek – The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	881	74,839
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	1,009	60,322
	Wellcome Library, London	68	33,446
	Total	1,985	181,011
COLLECTION 24: DEBATE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE Within this collection are pivotal texts, primarily in French, spanning the late 15th to the early 18th century. It features seminal classical works, and explores an array of subjects, from political and philosophical discourse to scientific and religious debates.	Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	1,000	210,000
COLLECTION 25: HISTORY CHRONICLES Covering histories from classical times to 1700, which are key to understanding Europe's wars, vast territorial expansion, and early societal evolution, this collection unveils pivotal historical moments, societal transformations, and the intricacies of daily life from multiple perspectives.	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)	73	30,258
	Det Kongelige Bibliotek – The Royal Library, Copenhagen (KBDK)	364	81,536
	Koninklijke Bibliotheek - The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague (KBNL)	696	124,718
	Wellcome Library, London	63	36,723
	Total	1,196	273,325
COLLECTION 26: SPANISH DRAMA, LITERATURE & POETRY Features Spanish materials from the period 1450 to 1700, from the British Library in London. It highlights significant literary figures of the time, including renowned authors such as Cristóbal de Castillejo (1544) and Lope de Vega (1599). Through these texts, researchers can explore the rich literary traditions of early modern Spain.	The British Library, London Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)	1,000	150,000
COLLECTION 27: JEWISH CULTURAL LIFE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD This prestigious collection from University College London, the largest collection of historic Judaica in the UK, contains works by Christian scholars of Hebrew texts and Judaism, polemics that are both pro- and anti-Jewish, alongside writings aimed at converting Jews to Christianity. Additionally, this collection includes significant works by Jewish authors, notably those of Manasseh ben Israel, presented in Portuguese with translations into English and Latin, as well as translations of Hebrew texts into various other languages.	University College London	300	80,000

Premier Partners

Leading European research libraries trust ProQuest to safely digitize their irreplaceable historic material for inclusion in Early European Books. Partner institutions include:

- **Det Kongelige Bibliotek (KBDK)/The Royal Library, Copenhagen** – Early European Books' first partner library, the KBDK is Denmark's national library and holds an almost complete collection of all Danish books printed since 1482. Collection 1 of Early European Books was made up of volumes from the KBDK in its entirety and, to date, KBDK material is a major component of Collection 3, 4 and 5. Digitization was carried out at the library.
- **Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF)/The National Central Library, Florence** – Early European Books' second partner library, the BNCF is one of the two central libraries of Italy. Originally founded in 1714 when the scholar Antonio Magliabechi bequeathed 30,000 books, the library quickly became a repository for all published works in Tuscany. Its holdings combined with those of the Biblioteca Palatina in 1861, by 1870 it had become a repository for the whole of Italy and in 1885 it became officially known as the National Central Library of Florence. The entirety of Collection 2 is material from the BNCF while further volumes from the BNCF form major components of Collection 3 and 4. Digitization was carried out at the library.
- **Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KBNL)/The Royal Library of the Netherlands in The Hague** – Founded in 1798, the library has a collection that contains almost the entire literature of the Netherlands, from early manuscripts to the most recent publications. Publication of material from the KBNL began with Collection 3, initially with an agreement to digitize the entire KBNL collection of material printed in the Netherlands before 1700 (approximately 28,500 items), with an option to extend this program to the digitization of the library's holdings of books printed outside the Netherlands before 1700.
- **Wellcome Library, London** – Founded on the private collection of Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936), the library's rich holdings encompass the history of medicine and include works on alchemy, anthropology and ethnology. Henry Wellcome began collecting books in the late 1890s, searching the world for a diverse range of books and buying collections such as William Morris's library and the library of Joseph Frank Payne, librarian to the Royal College of Physicians. As with the KBNL, material from the Wellcome begins with Collection 3.
- **Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)/National Library of France, Paris** – Intended as the national repository of everything published in France, the origins of the library go back to 1368 and the royal collection established by Charles V. First opened to the public in 1692, over the centuries the collection grew in size and shifted location on numerous occasions. During the French Revolution, the collection swelled to over 300,000 volumes and, later, under Napoleon's reign, became established as France's national repository. The first material from the library was released as part of Collection 4 in 2013. Since then, additional materials have continued to be released in subsequent, stand-alone collections.
- **The British Library (New Partner!)** – A research library in London and also the national library of the United Kingdom. It is one of the largest libraries in the world. It is estimated to contain over 170 million items from across the globe. Prior to 1973, the Library was part of the British Museum and it was during this time that the Spanish collection was first curated.
- **University College London ("UCL") (New Partner!)** – The second largest university in the UK, and its 17 libraries are spread across London. UCL's Special Collections comprise over 10,000 metres of rare books, manuscripts and archives dating from the 14th century to the present, and focus on the history of science and maths, medicine, the arts and literature, architecture and archaeology.



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