



Accessing the record of Europe's book heritage

Issue No. 47 - December 2025

The objects and aims of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) are to provide services to its members and to the library and scholarly world at large in the form of bibliographical databases, seminars, workshops, publications and co-operation with other library organisations and individual libraries and their staff. CERL concentrates its efforts on printed material from the hand-press period – up to the first half of the 19th century – and on manuscripts, both in analogue or digital format.

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David Shaw is awarded a Gold Medal by the Bibliographical Society

https://bibsoc.org.uk/bibliographical-society-announces-2025-gold-medalist/



Former Secretary, Dr David J. Shaw, was awarded a Gold Medal by the <u>Bibliographical Society</u>. The Medal is awarded more or less every other year. We warmly congratulate him with this well-deserved honour.

The Bibliographical Society noted that Dr Shaw was awarded the Gold Medal 'in recognition of his distinguished services to bibliography, including in the <u>Cathedral Libraries Catalogue</u> and his many publications on French and English printing.' Nicolas Bell, the Society's President, presented the medal

to Dr Shaw at the first lecture meeting of the new academic year, on 18 November 2025.

David Shaw's work still continues to benefit CERL: one day per week he uses the new ESTC editor environment at the British Library and one day per week he adds holdings for two collections at Canterbury Cathedral Library. A complete list of his digital productions, as well as his other publications, can be found at djshaw.uk.

End of Year 2025 Message from the CERL Chair, Dr Claudia Fabian

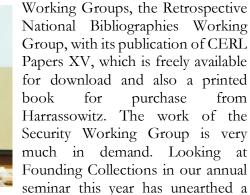
In Edinburgh, in October 2025, I completed my second year as your chair with the AGM, a seminar and the business meetings of EC and Board of Directors. Although the CERL financial and organisational year always starts on 1st October, this is the moment to gratefully acknowledge and thank each and all of you for what you have done for CERL, and on behalf of CERL

members to express our gratitude and appreciation to our so very dedicated central team and to colleagues of the Data Conversion Group.

In 2025, CERL work continued in line with its strategic plan. It has been rewarding and inspiring to meet and work with dedicated groups, to whom CERL owes the fulfilment of its roles in today's networking of research libraires. They represent the CERL membership, and it is vital to foster participation, meetings and contacts with all our members. We should always remember that CERL is a membership organisation the more we put in it, the more we can profit from it.

CERL has now been in existence and has shaped its activities and co-operation for more than 30 years. With new people joining CERL and becoming interested in CERL, an important part of my function this year has been overseeing organisational structures: membership, the legal aspects of the Company limited by Grantee in Ireland, ongoing financial responsibility and the handling of CERL's operations, in order to effectively support and serve members with awareness and efficient communications.

It is in this spirit that we are proud about our numerous professional achievements during this year – presented in full reports at the AGM and which can be read in the business report accompanying the Company's offical annual account. Let me briefly point to the activities of the Bindings and Provenance



wonderfully rich range of excellent papers for publication. If anyone else would like to contribute to this publication, please get in touch with us.

CERL's distinct characteristic is its data network, bringing together Europe's written heritage up to ca. 1850 in open access, specialist pan-European databases thesauri. CERL's core databases, Heritage of the Printed Book Database (HPB) with nearly 10 million records and the CERL Thesaurus, are supplemented by special bibliographic and copy/item/object oriented databases, like Material Evidence in Incunabula (MEI) and the Provenance Digital Archive (PDA) to which researchers contribute. In 2025 the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), an important international resource, was integrated into this network, marking a major achievement, next to ISTC and STCN. Significant work has also been carried out for the new Bibliography of Zürich Imprints and in preparation for access to the Polish Provenance Database. A new

specialist Working Group is directing and overseeing the convergence and research services of all databases in the CERL network.

Bridging professional and data expertise of CERL allowed us to participate in a EU Horizon Call on the invitation of the University of Helsinki (a CERL member). Preparing and defining a role in this Call was a major task for CERL. We now await the outcome of this application, but the exercise

has already shown the high appreciation of what CERL has been doing in amalgamating data for written cultural heritage relevant for research at a European level. This field has a huge potential and needs continuous financing and adapting, which is best done in a sustainable community. Focused work is in progress on a new website for CERL in 2026, and a refreshed version of the CERL logo has been successfully designed. We look forward to many conversations and meetings in 2026. I send you all very best wishes for the festive season and the new year.

Munich, 15 December 2025

Multilingual MEI Training in Rome

On 1 and 2 December 2025 a group of MEIenthusiasts assembled in Rome in the Sapienza University for a workshop on describing incunabula in MEI. The training was led by Cristina Dondi and given by 'The Team of the project Printing Revolution and American Collections: the migration of cultural heritage at times of political change (PrintRevUS)'. I joined them as an external trainer. During my work as curator of the Early Printed



Editions at the KB, National Library of the Netherlands, I led a group of interns. Some of these were CERL-interns, others were supported by Paul Needham in memory of Gerard van Thienen.

The invitation for joining this workgroup promised 'an in person, multilingual training in English, Italian, French, German, Polish, Russian, or Spanish' (and I could have added Dutch has there been any other Dutch participants). With 15 participants from Italy, Dublin, Spain, Hungary, Ireland and Germany, the workshop had drawn an richly international group. Given that there were 10 trainers, the training was very personal and that turned out to be very effective.

Each participant had brought a set of images pertaining to the provenance evidence of 4 to 5 Incunabula. Based on these images participants learned how to create an record in MEI, how to add authority entries to the database Owners of Incunabula and how to upload an describe provenance marks in CERL's Provenance Digital Archive (PDA). In small groups records in MEI were created and images were uploaded. There was much time for questions and deliberation. In the afternoon of the second day, all participants presented one of their records. The comments



offered by Cristina Dondi and other trainers were very instructive and added to learning process of this workshop.

Besides the practical work, it was inspirational to meet other MEI-editors, to discuss certain issues in MEI and how to tackle these. And on Monday evening Cristina Dondi had arranged a dinner in a nice Italian restaurant close to Sapienza where the participants had the possibility to get more acquainted. Such a workshop is very important for establishing a network to further the work on MEI.

Marieke van Delft, Coordinator of the PDA

Polish Provenance Database officially launched at CERL!

https://data.cerl.org/ppd

We are proud to announce that the <u>Polish Provenance Database (PPD)</u> was officially launched during the international *Hinc Omnia* conference at the University Library in Warsaw on 3 December 2025.

The database, considered a 'younger sister' to Cristina Dondi's MEI but focuses on post-1500 books in Polish collections. It was developed through collaboration between CERL and a consortium of seventeen Polish libraries, headed by the University of Warsaw Library. The oversight and implementation of the PPD are managed by Dr Martyna Osuch and Dr Wojciech Kordyzon representing the University of Warsaw, with development work carried out by Helena Nebel from the CERL Data Conversion Group in Göttingen.

The PPD is currently in a testing phase and will undergo a 6-month evaluation by consortium libraries to enhance its usefulness for both libraries and researchers.



Helena Nebel (DCG Göttingen), Wojciech Kordyzon (University Library Warsaw), Martyna Osuch (University Library Warsaw)

The database is accessible in both English and Polish, with intention to add more partners, including international ones, in 2027. For further information, please contact: martyna.osuch@uw.edu.pl and wojciech.kordyzon@uw.edu.pl

CERL Spring Meetings (20-21 March 2026), Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies



Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies

We are pleased to announce that the CERL Spring Meetings will take place on 20–21 March 2026 at the Gennadius Library of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, held in conjunction with the Library's centenary celebrations. The programme will include meetings of the Executive Committee and the Directors, and will coincide with the international conference 'Libraries and Collectors: A Symposium Celebrating the Centenary of the Gennadius Library" (21–22 March 2026), where CERL will host a session featuring Cristina Dondi, Jason McElligott, Geri Della Rocca de Candal and Paolo Sachet (PrintRevUS project), and Kristian Jensen. The conference will explore private collecting and its transformation into public knowledge institutions, the

history of printing and the organisation of knowledge, and the challenges and opportunities of openness in the digital age. The full programme of the conference will be circulated early in 2026.

CERL Meetings in Edinburgh

This October, The National Library of Scotland (NLS) in Edinburgh hosted the meetings of the Executive Committee, CERL's Board of Directors, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as well as part one of the CERL seminar 'Engaging with Founding Collections in the 21st Century.' From 20 to 22 October, CERL members were welcomed to the historic city of Edinburgh. The CERL meetings coincided with the centenary celebrations of the NLS, including the special exhibition <u>Dear Library</u>,



which was designed to be a 'love letter to libraries' and aims to celebrate and highlight the importance of libraries in society. The exhibition runs until 18 April 2026.

In 2014, CERL celebrated its 20th anniversary at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, so it was a pleasure to return to the city to celebrate our 30th anniversary. We were delighted to share a draft of a forthcoming CERL history book, which we hope to publish in 2026.



To mark the occasion, Ann Matheson, former CERL Chair (2000-2006), addressed the audience. In her speech, she reflected on the vital role of libraries, noting: "Libraries can be cultural bridges in harsh times, keeping doors open and upholding democratic values. The last thirty years has taught us that libraries are stronger and achieve more for their societies when they work together for

common goals."

After the AGM ended with a lovely sandwich lunch at the National Library of Edinburgh, several people went to selected libraries in

Edinburgh for a show-and-tell. We are very grateful to the colleagues of the Signet Library who offered CERL members a tour of their building. The colleagues at the Centre for Research Collections at the University of Edinburgh Library and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh each received CERL guests, who much appreciated being treated to a wonderful array of items from the collections.



In Memoriam: Ulf Göranson (1947-2025)

The full In Memoriam is at: https://www.cerl.org/about/organisation/ulfgoransoninmemoriam



The CERL community was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our former Chairman, Ulf Göranson on 20 July 2025. As Director of Uppsala University Library and later CERL's fourth Chairman (2011–2017), he strengthened CERL's role in the international library community and guided the Consortium through a period of renewal and growth. His leadership, vision, and generosity have left a lasting impact, and we remember him with immense gratitude and respect.

The CERL Board of Directors

https://www.cerl.org/about/organisation



From left to right: Claudia Fabian (CERL Chair), Marian Lefferts (CERL Executive Manager), Greg Prickman (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington), Saskia Scheltjens (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam), Marie de Laubier (Bibliothèque nationale de France), Cristina Dondi (CERL Secretary)

At the AGM, CERL members said their thanks to several colleagues who had served on the Board of Directors. Dr Xerxes Mazda (British Library) stepped down in May 2025 when he took up a new position at the British Museum. Mme Marie de Laubier (Bibliothèque nationale de France), Dr Greg Prickman (Folger Shakespeare Library) and Mrs Saskia Scheltjens (Rijksmuseum Research Library) came to the end of their second three-year term. They received a warm applause from the members and a small gift from the members of Secretariat. We are relieved that each of them has indicated their firm intention to stay actively involved in the CERL organisation and its Working Groups.

Five new Directors were elected to the Board and we are happy to introduce them to you here:



← **Dr Claude Conter** is Head at the National Library of Luxembourg



→ Drs Maaike Napolitano is head of the Collection Knowledge Department at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the national library of the Netherlands



→ **Dr Vera Andriopoulou** is Curator of Old and Rare Material and Head of the Historical Library at the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation



← Dr Thomas Kaufmann is one of the four Directors of the Göttingen State and University Library



← Dr Sébastien Gaudelus (Bibliothèque nationale de France) is Assistant to the Director of Collections for Scientific and Technical Questions at the BnF.

Three members of the Board of Directors had come to the end of their first three-year term, and we were exceedingly grateful that they were willing to stand for a second term: Dr Jason McElligott (Marsh's Library) who will continue to serve as the CERL Treasurer, as well as Dr Mark Purcell (Cambridge University Library) and Dr Pierre-Jean Riamond (French Ministry of Culture).

Highlights from the 'Engaging with Founding Collections in the 21st Century' Seminars

Our two-part seminar, Engaging with Founding Collections in the 21st Century, explored how Europe's major research libraries interact with their founding collections and examined the lasting impact these collections have on institutional identity. Founding collections reflect the lives, interests, and

networks of those who assembled them, bearing witness to the social, political, and personal contexts of their times. They may have grown or been decimated by chance encounters, wealth, discovery, generosity, or even theft, looting, and war. Over time, these collections can leave a lasting imprint on the libraries they inhabit, shaping their character and mission for generations.

Part one of the seminar was held at the National Library of Edinburgh on 21 October 2025 (programme), and part two took place at the Guildhall Library, London, on 5 December 2025 (programme). +In the course of 2026, we hope to



Graeme Hawley (Head of Published Collections, National Library of Scotland) delivering his welcome address

receive articles from the speakers at both events as we aim to publish the conference proceedings.



The City of London's Chief Commoner, Henry Pollard, welcoming the seminar participants to the Guildhall



Melanie Strong (Senior Librarian, Guildhall Library, London), co-organiser and host for the London Seminar

The seminar at the Guildhall not only brought us more fascinating stories of founding collections but also served as a networking event for the London Research Libraries Group. We are keen to hear from our other members on how we can bring them together to facilitate exchange!







Fltr: Nijolė Klingaitė-Dasevičienė (Director of Heritage Collections and Research Department of Vilnius Library), (right) Vicky Gerontopoulou (Onassis Library Coordinator at the Onassis Foundation, Athens), Katharina Kaska (Director of the Manuscripts and Rare Books Collection, Austrian National Library)

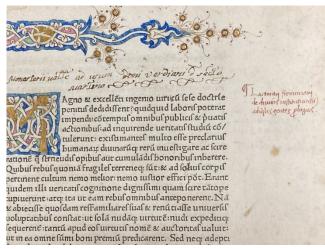
C. Dondi received a FIS Grant to work on US incunabula

https://www.printingrevolution.eu/printing-revolution-and-american-collections/

In August 2023 C. Dondi was awarded a four-year grant by the Italian Ministry of Research (Fondo Italiano per la Scienza = FIS) to work on incunabula held in the United States. The project, *Printing Revolution and American Collections: the migration of cultural heritage at times of political change* (PrintRevUS), is investigating the consequences, intended and unintended, direct and indirect, of historical policies and events on the European book heritage then migrated to the United States.

In collaboration with American libraries, a team of specialists is examining the books to reconstruct the history of their migration, in large collections such as Harvard, Yale, New York, Chicago, Princeton, Washington, Baltimore and San Marino in California, and in hundreds of smaller collections.

The project officially started November 2024. A letter about the project was sent to all US libraries member of CERL on 1 Oct. 2024. In Jan. 2025 C. Dondi was in New York City during Bibliography Week and had meetings with the Directors of the main libraries involved to discuss logistics. Five researchers started to work for the project in June 2025: Ester (NYC Morgan), Paolo Sachet (Harvard), Angeline Rais (Huntington), Martyna Grzesiak (Library of Congress), Geri Della Rocca de Candal (Greek editions). A dedicated server has been created to collect provenance images of



This is a fragement of Lactantius, Opera. Rome: Conradus Sweynheym and Arnoldus Pannartz, 1468. Folio.

incunabula in US collections. The server will be operational from January 2026, when C. Dondi will be writing to all US libraries with smaller collections of incunabula, asking them to share images of provenance with the project via the server. Anna Chemisova is liaising with US libraries and managing the server. In January 2026 three consultants will start to take images of provenance in some of the major collections and share them with the researchers on the Rome-based server. DCG has provided lists of editions printed in Italy and today in the US, extracted from ISTC. The researchers have checked these lists against the records of these incunabula in the libraries' online catalogues, to extract the shelfmark and any provenance data. These augmented lists have been sent back to DCG and thousands of MEI records (12,269 to date) have been created. Example: https://data.cerl.org/mei/02158606

These records will be completed once provenance images are taken by the consultants in situ, or the researcher examines the book in hand. These files do not include yet: c. 600 copies of Greek incunabula for which Geri is still collecting the shelfmarks; Yale (Paolo will work on this collection in phase 2); NYC Columbia, NYPL, and Chicago Newberry (Ester will work on these collections in phase 2).

The team will do a presentation in New York City during <u>Bibliography Week 2026</u> at the Italian Cultural Institute (22 January 2026, 2.30pm). After Bibweek, each researcher will be spending a month at the libraries assigned to them for 2026, i.e. Angeline at the Huntington, Ester at the Morgan, Paolo at Harvard, and Geri in California.

New CERL Members

The full list of members is available at https://www.cerl.org/membership/list members

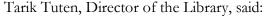
CERL is delighted to welcome its newest Special and Group Members, whose participation strengthens our international network and enriches the shared knowledge of early printed works. We look forward to collaborating with these institutions and celebrating the unique collections and expertise they bring to the CERL community.

Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library, Rhodes, Greece — New Special Member (October, 2025)

Learn more about the Library and its collections here: <u>hafizahmedaga.com</u>.

Established in 1793 by Hafiz Ahmed Agha, an Ottoman dignitary and bibliophile, on his native island of Rhodes in Greece, the Hafiz Ahmed is one of the Eastern Agha Library Mediterranean's most important surviving manuscript collections. Located in the historic centre of Rhodes, the Library preserves over 2,200 manuscripts in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, covering Islamic sciences, law, literature, history, medicine, logic, astronomy. Together, these manuscripts bear witness to the rich intellectual and cultural exchanges that once connected Europe, the Aegean, Anatolia, and the Arab world.

Managed by a charitable foundation, the Library is committed not only to preserving its collections but also to promoting scholarship and intercultural dialogue.



"Our decision to join CERL reflects our commitment to



Courtyard view of the Library building

placing the Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library within the wider network of European research libraries and scholars dedicated to manuscripts and book history. As an 18th-century manuscripts library with a distinctive history and a largely unexplored collection, we see CERL as an essential platform for raising awareness of our heritage and increasing the visibility and accessibility of our holdings. Through this membership, we hope to benefit from CERL's expertise in cataloguing, digitalisation, preservation, and collaborative research. In return, we aim to contribute by offering access to our rare manuscripts, sharing knowledge about the cultural context of our collection, and participating in the collective efforts to advance manuscript research and promote responsible stewardship of Europe's written heritage."



Library shelves at the Hafiz Ahmed Agha Library

The Venerable English College, Rome — New Special Member (September, 2025)

https://www.vecheritage.org/visit-us.



The Archive Collections of the Venerable English College constitute the oldest British archival collection outside the United Kingdom. They record more than 650 years of history, stretching back to its foundation on the present site as a hospice for English and Welsh pilgrims in 1362. Their Rare Books collection includes a remarkable one hundred Bibles, including several important polyglot editions. There are complete collections of numerous

Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and more than one thousand volumes in non-Latin scripts, illustrating the global reach of Catholic scholarship and activity. Of the incunabula, a gift from

Christophe Plantin himself links the collection to one of the greatest printers of the sixteenth century. The College's Heritage Collections are under the direction of Jane Eade. You can book a visit to the Reading Room, or access a PDF of the existing Archive catalogue via the website above.



We were honoured and grateful that, at very short notice, Renaud Milazzo, Library and Archives Manager of the Venerable English College, was able to present a paper on the history of the institution to the community at the second CERL Seminar on Founding Collections.

Ediciones Ampersand, Buenos Aires — New Special Member (June, 2025)

https://www.edicionesampersand.com/biblioteca



Ediciones Ampersand, Buenos Aires, Image credit: Pablo Cosgaya

On 1 June 2025, Ediciones Ampersand in Buenos Aires became CERL's first Special Member from South America. Under the direction of Ana Mosqueda, Ampersand is a publishing house devoted to the history of the book and the culture of print, and it maintains a specialised library that includes important collections on typography, bibliography, and the graphic arts.

As part of its new collaboration with CERL, Ampersand has begun a survey of South American incunabula with the aim of enriching CERL's ISTC and MEI databases. This is an initiative that promises to shed light on the early circulation of printed books in the region.

In a recent post on the CERL blog, Librarian Tomás de Brito introduces the institution, its collections, and its commitment to advancing research into the history of early printing.

Dr Williams's Library, London — New Group Member (July, 2025)

Dr Williams's Library became a member of the London Research Libraries Group in July 2025. Directed by Hugh Maguire, the Library enriches the Group's activities with its exceptional collections in theology, dissenting history, literature, and intellectual culture. Its addition enhances the collaborative efforts of London's research libraries and broadens the range of materials and expertise represented within the CERL community.

Edinburgh University Library — New Special Member (February, 2025)

https://library.ed.ac.uk/

Edinburgh University Library joined CERL as a Special Member on 19 February 2025. Formerly part of the Scottish Research Libraries Group with St Andrews UL and Glasgow UL, the library now enters CERL independently, strengthening its long-standing engagement with CERL's research and bibliographical initiatives.

Daryl Green, who is Associate Director, Heritage Collections, at the Library is now the Chair of the CERL Manuscripts Librarians Working Group and his colleague, Christine Megowan, has joined the CERL working group 'CERL data network - use and usability'.



Edinburgh University Library, Image credit: Stinglehammer / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

Boston Medical Library — New Group Member (August, 2025)



Boston Medical Library, Image credit: ajay_suresh / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

The Boston Medical Library joined the Group of US Libraries on 1 August 2025. Under the leadership of Director Beth Kilmarx, the Library brings substantial historical medical collections and recognised subject expertise to the group's collaborative work within CERL. Its participation further strengthens the Group's capacity to support research into the history of medicine and the book, and to contribute to shared initiatives across the CERL network.

Polish Group Membership — New Group Member (June, 2025)

Pomeranian Library in Szczecin

The Group Membership of Polish Libraries in CERL was re-formed in 2025, with a new agreement officially signed on 1 June. Although the Gdańsk Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences left the Group in 2024, the Pomeranian Library in Szczecin has now joined, maintaining the membership at eight institutions. Group contacts are Krzysztof Soliński (National Library of Warsaw) and Krzysztof Nierzwicki (University Library of Warsaw).



Second Bookbinding Academy

https://boekbandengenootschap.nl/activiteiten-bnb/bookbindings-academy-2026/

Together with the Belgian-Dutch Bookbindings Society (<u>Belgisch-Nederlands</u> <u>Boekbandengenootschap</u>), CERL has organised the second Bookbinding Academy and we cordially invite anyone with an interest in bookbindings to join us online on **16 January** and **13**

February 2026 (both sessions start at 15.00h CET). The Bookbindings Academy offers a platform to share recent research results, or to give important research extra attention. The goals of Bookbindings Academy are to share knowledge on bookbindings internationally and to create more possibilities for future international collaboration to increase that knowledge.

For the next two sessions we have invited **Katell Lavéant** (Curator at Allard Pierson, Amsterdam), who together with **Malcolm Walsby** (ENSSIB, Lyon), will present on Bookbindings in Two Sixteenth-Century Private 'Dutch' Libraries. **Daphne Wouts** (Leiden University) will join us to talk about A special bookbinding by Louis Elzevier in the town library of Enkhuizen and **Mitchel Gundrum** (The Huntington Library, Pasadena (CA)) will present on the context in which the earliest known European manual on bookbinding techniques (by Anselm Faust) came about. Our final speaker is **Edwin**



Mitchel Gundrum with Anselm Faust's Beschrijvinghe des Boeckhinders Handwerck / Prescription de la Manifacture des Relieurs

Bloemsaat (antiquarian bookseller) on painted parchment book bindings.

Participation in the Bookbindings Academy is **free**, but registration is recommended. Upon registration you will receive a Zoom-link that will take you to the presentations. The online sessions will open shortly before 15.00h CET. This is an annual event, and we would be happy to hear from you if you would like to present your research in early 2027.

New ERC Project



In September 2024 Matilde Malaspina secured a five-year ERC Starting Grant to work on Hernando Colón's universal library. European culture and intellectual production at the dawn of the global world (COLIBRI). The project, based at Sapienza University of Rome, started on 1 Oct. 2025. The BOB database that was previously created for Dr Malaspina within CERL's digital ecosystem, will be further enhanced and will continue to grow with the identification of

incunabula from Colón's collection (partly in Seville, partly dispersed), as well as 16th-century printed books and occasional manuscripts. The COLIBRI will be presented in New York City during BibWeek 2026 at the Italian Cultural Institute on 22 January 2026.