

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Greengrass, Mark, Michael Leslie, and Michael Hannon, project leads. The Hartlib Papers. Database

Evan Bourke

Volume 43, numéro 3, été 2020

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075295ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35313>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

#### Citer ce compte rendu

Bourke, E. (2020). Compte rendu de [Greengrass, Mark, Michael Leslie, and Michael Hannon, project leads. The Hartlib Papers. Database]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(3), 257–260.  
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35313>

*and Textuality in the Renaissance* made use of the RCCC's documentation of English books printed abroad and their liminary materials.<sup>3</sup> A 2018–22 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant project titled *Trajectories of Translation in Early Modern Britain (1473–1660): Routes, Mediations, Networks*, headed by Belle and Hosington, is investigating the phenomenon of intermediary translation (translation into and out of one “intermediary” language on the way to English, such as from Greek to French to English, in the case of Homer’s *Iliad*); it draws on RCCC’s documentation of intermediary translator and intermediary language as starting points for inquiry. In the burgeoning field of early modern English translation, the RCCC will remain the database of choice for future research.

JOSHUA REID

East Tennessee State University

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35312>

**Greengrass, Mark, Michael Leslie, and Michael Hannon, project leads.  
The Hartlib Papers. Database.**

Sheffield: University of Sheffield, The Digital Humanities Institute, 2013.  
Accessed 2 July 2020.  
[dhi.ac.uk/hartlib](http://dhi.ac.uk/hartlib).

The Hartlib Papers is a full-text database of the correspondence, diary, and associated material of the seventeenth-century “intelligencer” and man of science, Samuel Hartlib (ca. 1600–62). The chronological span of the materials in the database ranges from 1620 to Hartlib’s death in 1662 and covers diverse topics including religion, politics, medicine, and economics. The Hartlib Papers was established as an interdisciplinary project by Sheffield University Library and the English and History departments at Sheffield in 1985. The aim of this endeavour was to create an electronic edition of Hartlib’s papers, complete with full-text transcription and facsimile images of the materials held in the Sheffield University archive. The first phase of the project was published as two

3. A. E. B. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

CD-ROMs in 1996, which was cutting edge and ahead of its time. The second phase of the project was an enlarged edition, which expanded the original corpus to include materials related to Samuel Hartlib from other libraries around the world, and this was also published as CD-ROMs in 2002. The third and most recent version of this project (and the topic of this review) is the open-access online edition, launched in 2013, and based on the original CD-ROM versions.<sup>1</sup>

The textbase currently consists of seventy-one of the seventy-two bundles of Hartlib Papers in Sheffield, alongside some of Hartlib's printed pamphlets and the additional material, which includes but is not limited to the documents acquired for the second edition of the CD-ROM. The documents in this database are diplomatic transcriptions, supported, where available, with facsimile images. Annotations are minimal, and where they occur, they focus on highlighting different hands within the documents, alongside Hartlib's alterations. The editorial and technical practices are not documented on the site, and the home page's promise of background information has not yet been realized. Previous reviewers have highlighted the technological issues of updating the dataset between editions and suggests that the corpus conforms "in part to the Text Encoding Initiative."<sup>2</sup> However, without any documentation, it is impossible to see how they do so on the site itself. The website also lacks any detailed metadata on the individual documents. This is somewhat mitigated by the project's link to the Cultures of Knowledge (COK) project, based at the University of Oxford. As part of their Early Modern Letters Online (EMLO) resource, COK has compiled metadata on all the correspondence in the Hartlib Papers and has established a Hartlib catalogue on their site. The interface of this catalogue is elegant and easy to navigate, making it a great first port of call for any new users of The Hartlib Papers site. Unfortunately, The Hartlib Papers misses a beat by not linking to (or at the very least mentioning) EMLO's Hartlib metadata catalogue.

As the open-access version is largely a transposition of the 2002 CD-ROM, it results in the design and interface already feeling like a legacy website—most notably in the poor image quality of the facsimiles that accompany

1. For a thorough and comprehensive history of this archive and its digitization, see Leigh T. I. Penman, "Omnium Exposita Rapinae: The Afterlives of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib," *Book History* 19 (2016): 1–65, doi.org/10.1353/bh.2016.0000.

2. Penman, 47.

the documents. However, the history of these images needs to be taken into account. They were originally taken during the first phase of the project and needed to be in black and white and a low resolution in order to fit on the CD-ROM. This decision was reasonable, but it is unfortunate that they have not been updated, especially considering how quickly image quality has advanced and the benefits of high-quality images for researchers.

The main way of navigating the site is through trans-text searches, reference searches, and browsing. The main search interface allows users to search transcription, dates, and titles, offering auto-complete options in order to aid searches. Importantly, it also includes an advanced syntax guide to assist users in searching the transcriptions, as spellings have not been standardized. Although this works well, it only works to its fullest when the user is aware of the various potential spellings of the term(s) they are searching for. While this is in no way a deterrent for researchers, this lack of standardized search terms combined with the lack of annotations in the documents themselves means that the site may not be overly accessible to students. The reference search also works well, but it is not without its difficulties. If the reference is not the first folio of a document, the reference search will return no results. This is especially problematic for Hartlib's diary, known as his *Ephemerides*, as different years of this document can reach over one hundred folios in length. The project team attempted to overcome this issue by breaking each year of the *Ephemerides* into different parts ranging between ten and fifteen folios in length. While helpful, this does not fully overcome the issue, as a user must know what folios the different parts start on to access the required section of the document via reference search, while also making it impossible for users to discern (without consultation of the original) how the document is compiled or bound.

Despite what amounts to small issues with the interface and documentation, The Hartlib Papers is still an invaluable and largely untapped resource for historians and for literary scholars interested in life-writing. There is plenty to mine for those interested in the history of science and medicine; it offers an avenue in which scholars can explore the lives of men and women involved in the production of knowledge in the early- to mid-seventeenth century; and it is a rich resource for those interested in epistolary culture, housing examples of familiar letters, newsletters, kinship letters, and letters of petition, among others. Therefore, while the resource might be initially hard to navigate for students, there is plenty of interest that, with guided use in the classroom, would yield

ample discussion and reward. Finally, that such a large corpus of material is open access is a boon, as many projects that made similar online editions, based on earlier (mainly print) editions, are behind paywalls. For this, the project must be commended, especially as it is such a longstanding digital project that not only presents the knowledge-collecting endeavours of Samuel Hartlib but makes this knowledge freely accessible.

EVAN BOURKE

Maynooth University

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35313>

### **Susanna De Schepper, project lead.**

#### **Short Title Catalogue Flanders (STCV). Database.**

Antwerp: Flanders Heritage Libraries, 2000. Accessed 18 June 2020.  
stcv.be/en.

Since 2000, the Short Title Catalogue Flanders (STCV) project has been building an online bibliography of all editions of books printed in Flanders between 1473 and 1801. Maintained by the Vlaamse Erfgoedbibliotheek (Flanders Heritage Libraries), an organization composed of six heritage libraries in Belgium, the database supports the group's goal to spread knowledge of collections based in Flanders and Brussels. Now celebrating its twentieth year, the database boasts descriptions of more than twenty-five thousand editions based on data from around fifty thousand copies.

The method section on the website clearly explains what is and is not included on the database. All the books listed were printed in Flanders, as defined by current boundaries, with the exception of books claiming to be printed within Flanders on false imprints. Journals are not included. Each record was compiled with the book in hand covering items from twenty-six collections in Belgium as well as thirty-one libraries outside of Flanders. There is also a handy table updated monthly showing which collections have been fully processed and which are still to be added. While not included in the first iteration, single-sheet items are being added gradually. It is important to bear in mind any exclusions if you are using the database to gain a wider overview of printing in Flanders pre-1801.