

Religions of the Book

SHARP's 22nd annual conference
Antwerp, 17-21 September 2014

The 22nd annual conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing (SHARP) will be held in Antwerp (Belgium), Wednesday 17 September through Sunday 21 September 2014. The program takes place primarily at the University of Antwerp, in the old centre of the city, but includes events at different venues of book historical interest as well as preconference workshops/tours and excursions. The central theme is 'Religions of the Book', but in conformity with tradition the conference also welcomes other book historical papers, sessions and round tables.

Sponsors include the Plantin-Moretus Museum, the Hendrik Conscience Library, the Flemish House of Literature, the Antwerp Bibliophile Society, the Museum of Letters & Manuscripts, KBC Banking & Insurance, the Flemish Book Historical Society and the University of Antwerp.

Organising committee

Kevin Absillis, chair

(University of Antwerp)

Stijn Van Rossem, chair

(Flemish Book Historical Society)



Maartje De Wilde

(Hendrik Conscience Library)

Goran Proot

(Folger Shakespeare Library)

Kristof Selleslach

(Plantin-Moretus Museum)

Steven Van Impe

(Hendrik Conscience Library)

Contact us at:

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The full details for the call for papers and submission form will be available soon on the conference website: www.sharp2014.be

ANTWERP — Ever since printers such as Gheraert Leeu, Mathias van der Goes and Dirk Martens established businesses in Antwerp at the end of the fifteenth century, the city has been an important typographical centre. The jewel in its crown remains the Museum Plantin-Moretus, recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. The only surviving printing office of the Ancien Régime, with its entire infrastructure, archive and library still intact, attracts thousands of visitors each year. But many other printers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, bibliophiles and authors too have left their mark on this vibrant port on the river Scheldt. Moreover, Antwerp continues to be a book centre. It hosts an annual book fair that attracts approximately 200,000 visitors, houses numerous publishing companies and libraries, and invests considerably in its print heritage. Meanwhile thrilling festivals, bright cartoon and poetry murals as well as an officially elected 'city poet' add to its lively literary atmosphere. Hence, it was by no means a coincidence that Antwerp was elected World Book Capital by UNESCO in 2004. Moreover, the city is an excellent location to further explore the rich heritage of Belgium with hotspots like Ghent, Louvain, Brussels and Bruges all within an hour's distance and European cities such as Amsterdam, Paris, London and Cologne hardly any farther (two to three hours by train).

CONFERENCE THEME — Next to books, literature and print heritage, religious diversity is an important part of Antwerp's identity. From the middle of the sixteenth century onwards the city was the scene of ferocious battles between Calvinism and Catholicism. Jews and Muslims have also been an integral part of Antwerp's past and both communities are visibly present in the city today. To illustrate the shared heritage of the three 'religions of the Book' that left their mark on the city, Antwerp will host a prestigious double exhibition from September 2014 to January 2015. One part will run in the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) orbiting around 'Sacred Places and Pilgrimage', the other will take place in the Hendrik Conscience Library and will focus on 'Sacred Books'. Although SHARP 2014 will kick off this major double exhibition and alludes explicitly to the three 'religions of the Book' – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – the actual scope of the conference is much broader and may include the relationship between any religion(s) and the production, distribution and consumption of books and texts, in

whatever form (manuscript, printed or digital), in any region or any period of time. Religious and anti-religious censorship, iconography, spiritual literature, preaching practices are only a few of the many possible approaches. Moreover, participants to SHARP's 22nd annual conference are invited to explore the more metaphorical dimensions of its central topic. We warmly invite proposals relating the theme to bibliophilia (a religion devoted to the book?), cult books, the role of authors as high priests, reading as a trance-provoking practice, the sacral status of the printed book in Enlightenment ideology, the strong belief in the freedom of the press... One may even consider the cultural apocalypse pessimists see ensue from the on-going process of digitization, or, inversely, the imminent salvation promised by internet and tablet gurus. Cutting-edge proposals, dealing with other aspects of book history and print culture are also welcome, but priority will be given to papers addressing the conference theme.

DEADLINE AND FURTHER REQUIREMENTS —

Papers presented at SHARP conferences are expected to offer original scholarship and to go beyond descriptive accounts of archival or textual materials. Speakers should outline the wider implications of research presented. Both the thesis being tested and the conclusions drawn should be clearly stated in the proposal. SHARP prides itself on attracting members from a variety of disciplines, who communicate in a language accessible to diverse specialists. Proposals are to indicate how the paper (or panel) sheds light on some issue, principle, or practice of book history that clearly addresses SHARP's interests.

The conference is open to both individual presentations and complete panel proposals (with three speakers and a chairperson). Each speaker is allotted 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for discussion. All sessions last 90 minutes. Paper proposals should be no more than 400 words, are submitted in English and accompanied by a brief biography. Panel proposals consist of three individual 400-word proposals, the required biographies and an introduction.

The deadline for submissions (both individual proposals and sessions) is 30 November 2013. The program committee will send notifications of its selection no later than 15 February 2014. All participants, including chairs and speakers, must be members of SHARP in order to participate. Registration for the conference is a prerequisite. For information on membership, please visit the SHARP website at www.sharpweb.org.

TRAVEL GRANTS — SHARP is able to provide a limited number of travel grants to graduate students and independent scholars. If you wish to be considered for such a grant, please state this when submitting your proposal.